Master-Auction

Florence Irwin

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By Florence Irwin

Master-Auction

The Complete Auction Player
Post War Edition

Road to Mecca

Poor Dear Theodora

Master-Auction

Auction for Those Who Know It

By

Florence Irwin

Author of "Complete Auction," "Fine Points of Auction Bridge," etc.

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PREFACE

If you do not know how to play Auction, this is not the book for you. I recommend my *Complete Auction Player* which will start you at the beginning and turn you out a smooth and accomplished player—time and effort on your part being taken for granted.

If you know the rudiments and routine of Auction and are perfectly content never to know more, never to improve your game, never to rise above mediocrity, again this is not the book for you. There is no book for you.

But if you, being a player of any grade whatever, are eager to push ever nearer to perfection, if you are interested in keeping pace with the latest discussions, in studying the illustrations of various subtle and pretty points, in polishing away the small ignor-

ances which are surprisingly in evidence even among good players, then this is—I greatly hope—the exact book for you. Certainly, I have tried very hard to make it so.

F. I.

HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON,
May, 1920.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The One-Double	1
II.	Fallacies	39
III.	Some Points	70
IV.	Some Hands	131
V.	Some Questions	177
VI.	Half-Rules	187
VII.	The Ruff	194
VIII.	The Real Double	213
IX.	Eights and Nines	238
X.	Condensed Leads	250
XI.	History	253

MASTER-AUCTION

CHAPTER I

THE ONE-DOUBLE

Woe is me that I should be obliged to record, not only the continued existence of the one-double, but its increased popularity. It has spread, and is spreading—but if it ever becomes universal, it will certainly be over my dead body.

Bolshevism has spread, and is spreading—you can even hear many smooth and eloquent arguments in its favor; laziness has spread, and is spreading; strife and discord have spread, and are spreading; and so, too, of arrogance and hatred and unrest. But I shouldn't consider that an argument in their

favor; it is merely one more indictment of human nature—one more proof that all brains aren't the best brains.

I fear that it would take more than a few pages of print—which are all that here avail me—to put the one-double out of existence. That, moreover, is not my present object. I am even about to show its devotees how to use it properly. But before I do that, let me once more put myself on record as its implacable enemy, and let me give you my reasons.

It is dishonest—wouldn't you rather be straight?

It is illegitimate—wouldn't you rather stand by the law?

It is cowardly—wouldn't you rather be a good sport?

It is clumsy—wouldn't you rather be graceful?

It is dangerous—wouldn't you rather play safe?

It is unkind—wouldn't you rather be gracious?

It is insidious—its habit is like drug-taking.

It is retrogressive—don't you care to stand for progress?

And finally, *it is unnecessary*—which is equivalent to saying it is stupid. For if a thing is dishonest, illegitimate, cowardly, clumsy, dangerous, unkind, insidious, and retrogressive, the only conceivable excuse for anyone's embracing it would be the fact that it would serve him a turn which nothing else would; when that excuse vanishes, when the thing is proven unnecessary to the accomplishment of his end, what would you think of him for still clinging to it?

Now, as abuse is cheap till proof is forthcoming, let me give you the reasons for my statements.

The one-double is dishonest because it means something quite other than what it says. I needn't tell you that to double honestly is to show that you want the adversary to play his bid and that you expect to beat him at it;

but that is very far from being what the one-double means. Doubling a one no-trump means, "Partner, please tell me, what is your best suit?" Doubling a one-suit bid means, "Oh dear, that bid of the adversary's has just spoiled my no-trumper. I haven't a stopper in his suit. Do you happen to have one, Partner?"

When you put this conversation into cold print, doesn't it look rather bald? Doesn't it savor a bit of sharp practice? *Even though everyone at the table knows the signal, that doesn't excuse it.* The adversaries of a one-doubler can not possibly prevent his partner from giving him the explicit information that he has demanded by a set and false form of words. A signal doesn't have to be secret to be lacking in sportsmanship.

It is illegitimate. From time immemorial it has been conceded that specific information in card games (except the bare terms of the bidding which are necessary to the life of any bidding-game—terms which mean exactly

what they say) must be conveyed by play of cards—not by word of mouth. Conveyed by cards, it takes skill to give, skill to read, and there is always the sporting chance of lacking the proper cards and of having to use one's wits in order to circumvent the awkwardness. Conveyed by word of mouth, it takes no skill to give, no skill to read, and there is no sporting chance: nothing but sudden paralysis of the tongue could prove embarrassing.

It is cowardly. The man who doubles a one-bid is afraid to take a chance at a bid, even though he holds a hand that is too strong to pass. He wants to "pussy-foot" and find out what his partner has, before he commits himself. A disease somewhat akin to this broke out in certain local circles some two years ago. My only knowledge of it came through various letters begging me to champion, or to kill, it. The dealer would neither pass nor bid; instead, he would say, "I reserve my bid." Then, he would either glean information, or if the other three play-

ers passed he would still have the right to bid. This absurd "reserved" bid and the one-double are blood-brothers.

It is clumsy. It is always clumsy to make the wrong person carry a load. The player who, holding a strong hand himself, hears his adversary announce a strong hand, has every reason to expect his partner to hold a weak one. Yet he forces that weak hand to bid, while he, himself, shirks the responsibility.

It is dangerous. When a one-double goes wrong, it goes wronger than any other wrong thing I ever saw. By its very nature it must. The danger of the bid is marked by its exactions. No one may possibly be left with it. If a man says to his partner, "I'll go into this place, but for Heaven's sake don't leave me there! Come immediately and drag me out by hook or crook," would you look upon that as a very *safe* place? And when even the rescuer may be in as much danger as the adventurer, I say avoid the place.

It is unkind. It places on weak shoulders

a burden that strong ones refuse to assume. No weak hand should be so victimized; no strong one should be permitted so to victimize a partner. It is an agonizing moment when a player hears himself ordered to bid on material that warrants no bid. He'll be damned if he does, and he'll be damned if he doesn't—especially will he be damned if he doesn't.

It is insidious. Take my word for it, if you once begin using one-doubles you'll go on—not because of their startling success, but because you'll soon find that you don't know how to sit up without this brace—how to walk without this crutch for a lame duck. I note the insidious spread of the disease in my pupils. Of course, I must teach them every variation of the game, and I permit them free choice of school—even while I emphasize that which I consider best. Those who eschew the one-double never miss it; they soon learn to cover every situation effectively without its aid. Those who elect

the one-double are soon its slaves. Holding a no-trump hand and hearing a no-trump bid by the adversary, they will say to me: "*I* don't know whether this is a pass or a two no-trump bid. *I'll just double and put it up to my partner!*" And very soon they learn to dispense with all reasoning except that contained in their last sentence: "I'll just double and put it up to my partner." Mind, it is the weak players who do this instinctively; but artificial braces will eventually weaken any player, no matter how strong.

It is retrogressive. The day of the forced bid ended when a special congress decided that the dealer might pass. What engendered that decision? *American "high spades!"* In the days when the dealer (or his partner) was forced to bid, there had to be protection against too heavy losses. Spades at two a trick, and a stop-loss, formed this protection *until* certain players had the brilliant idea of taking advantage of the low spade value and making it a means of illegitimate bidding.

An entire set of false bids was coined; lest they prove too elaborate for ordinary memories, "bid-cards" were printed—these to be carried to every game. It is unnecessary here to describe all those ancient spade-bids, ranging from "one" to "seven." The last three will serve as an example: "Five spades" meant, "Partner, take your choice between hearts and royals"—("royals" being spades at nine a trick); "Six spades" meant "Take your choice between hearts and no-trumps"; and "Seven spades" meant "Take your choice between royals and no-trumps!"

But a few short years ago that method was heralded as the "coming landslide in Auction." What does it sound like to-day? And I am forced sorrowfully to admit that it was an American idea, that it came close to killing America's Auction prestige; instead of asking "What are the latest American theories?" players in other countries were coming to ask "What are the latest American jokes?"—and it took a long and

arduous newspaper campaign to kill. AND THE ONE-DOUBLE COMES FROM THE SAME SCHOOL OF PROMOTERS WHO LOOSED AND SPONSORED THE MISERABLE HIGH-SPADES! In other words, there are certain players whose minds and tastes demand false bids; deprive them of one set, and they immediately coin another.

However, my point is this: since it has been definitely and officially decided by Auction-congress that no player shall be forced to bid, it is not only retrogressive, but it is an infringement on a player's most elementary privileges, so to force him. Yet that is what happens to the luckless partner of the one-doubler: he is robbed of his passing-privileges (which are his intrinsic right), and is forced to bid. Regardless of poverty, of danger, of distaste, he must bid; his partner has so ordered. *The partner with the strong hand hides behind a shelter, at the same time commanding the partner with the weak hand to bid.*

Now, all these indictments might, I sup-

pose, be set aside if the fact remained that the one-double was necessary to the success of certain situations—that it could do something that nothing else could do. But when that last prop is knocked away, surely the one-doubler is left without a leg to stand on! And it is this last prop which I am about to assail by means of hands which have recently come under my observation—all of them actual hands, none of them with a single spot altered to fit my theories.

If you are a one-doubler, I know what you will say: you won't care for the examples that I give. You will think that if they were a little different here, a little changed there, my points could not be scored. Perhaps you will "wish she could see that hand we played last week when the one-double worked so well." Then let me answer you thus: you could almost certainly never show me a hand in which I would not undertake to substitute for your one-double, a two-suit bid, a two-no-trump bid, or a pass—and with equal suc-

cess. And if you *should* succeed in showing me such a hand, you still couldn't convince me that the one-double was honest—for it isn't. And I'm old-fashioned enough to have a strong *penchant* for honesty. There will always be those who prefer subterfuge to frankness, there will always be those who will put themselves on record as supporters of false methods, but I'm free to confess that their tastes are not mine. Nor do I stand alone, for (you see, I've saved my most knock-out argument till the last) players who are hailed as some of the best in the world detest that one-double as heartily as do I. Whether ethically or economically, they have no use for it. A man whose name is known everywhere that Auction is played told me that it was the most expensive experiment he had ever tried. Said he, "Let the penny players monkey with it if they want to. The dollar players will let it alone." I'm told that most of the best-known Clubs in America stand against it, as Clubs—

which is not to say that none of their members use it. However, I can assure you that if you decide to range yourself on my side, you will not lack good company—the best, in fact.

As I find that the double of a one-no-trump bid is much more popular than the double of a one-suit bid, I shall confine myself to discussing the former; the latter seems dying or dead. And now for the hands:

It is a clean score, and Z naturally prefers to bid no-trumps rather than clubs. *Never-*

theless, should he be pushed very far he would certainly jump into clubs, forced by the shortness of his other suits.

By any sane and honest system of bidding, A holds the winning hand. He can make the highest successful bid at the table, and this bid is perfectly obvious the moment he looks at his hand. He can defeat any bid that is made against his own safe one. If he uses common sense and common honesty the hand is his. True, he cannot go game on it,—but neither can he juggle it into a game-hand by any possible system of false bids and false doubles. *No artificial system will increase the value of his hand one iota.* No trick that was ever invented will serve him as well as good old-fashioned science and common sense. Even chicanery has its limits, you see.

A's bid is plainly "Two diamonds." He is debarred from two no-trumps by his singleton club, and by the knowledge that clubs must positively be Z's long suit. With two

aces, two kings, a queen, and two jacks in his own hand, A must know that Z is long where he, himself, is short, and that the no-trumper was bid on strong clubs and side re-entry. This knowledge guides A to the bid of "Two diamonds."

I have already said that where the one-doubler doubles one no-trump, I take my choice of three courses—passing, bidding two no-trumps, or bidding two in some suit. I can give no hard-and-fast rule to cover all hands, but the practiced player will never be at a loss as to the proper course. The hand under discussion, for instance, is much too strong to allow A to pass, much too weak in clubs to permit a two-no-trump bid (lacking as it does, the master-card of its own best suit), and exactly right for a two-diamond bid. Perhaps you will sneer at diamonds on a clean score, but surely you would rather make three-odd diamonds with twenty-eight honors than let your adversary make an unmolested no-trump? And surely you

would rather play diamonds triumphantly than no-trumps disastrously?

A's hand, however, is the exact type on which the average player (who is also a "no-trump hound") would double the one no-trump. In this case, what will happen? Y will pass—the adversary of a one-doubler must always pass, if he has any sense; B must bid—the partner of a one-doubler must always bid, whether he has any sense or not. He will be forced to say "Two clubs" on his only four-card suit—and that, by the way, is one of the strongest of the many indictments against the one-double: it forces a two-bid on four trumps, and a two-bid on four trumps has been admitted to be bad Auction ever since the principles of scientific bidding were established.

B, poor wretch, bids "Two clubs," and Z passes from pleasure. A, thinking clubs are stopped in B's hand, goes to the "Two no-trumps" for which he has been secretly hankering—and the fat is in the fire.

A's wiser course, after the two-club bid from his partner, would be to over-call with "Two diamonds." He would then be just where I would have had him in the first place, only he would get there clumsily instead of gracefully. The false double fails to change the situation, and A reaches the same point by both routes—except that in the first case he reaches it with clean hands and a pure heart, and in the second case he doesn't.

Where was the great value of his one-double?

I showed this hand to a one-doubler. "But," objected he, "suppose you, being in A's place, should bid your famous 'Two no-trumps'? What then?"

"But I wouldn't," I cried. "That would be as crazy as doubling the one. The cards forbid such a bid. I'd say 'Two diamonds' without a second's hesitation."

"Very well," he replied, "I'll sit in A's place and I'll double the one no-trump. Change B's cards just a trifle—give him five spades to the queen——"

"He can't have the queen," I objected. "That's one of the things on which Z has bid his no-trump. You be A and take his cards; I'll be Z and take his. Fix the rest of them to suit yourself."

He shoved them into this position:

"There," he said. "I'm A. I double your one no-trump, my partner gives me 'Two spades' and we make them."

"Oh no, you don't," I told him. "I'm still alive. I bid 'Three clubs'—and I make them, with forty-eight honors."

"I bid 'Three spades,'" he countered.

"And lose——"

"Not a bit of it!"

But he did—though as the hand progressed I'll admit to fears.

I led the king of clubs. Then, as I didn't mind letting dummy trump with an honor (you see, A is now dummy), I followed with the queen of clubs. A trumped with the ten. If he now exhausts trumps I make a round, Y makes a round, and B is left with a losing club. Losing two clubs, two trumps, and a diamond, he'd make but two-odd.

So, after trumping the second club, he led the king of diamonds, which I took. I led the jack of clubs, and A trumped with the jack. Then he led the ace of spades, then a low diamond to his own ten. Next, the jack of hearts, which I covered and dummy won; then the queen of diamonds, on which he threw a heart and which I trumped with the king. I led the ace of clubs, dummy threw a heart, Y his last diamond, and B trumped.

He led his last heart to dummy's ace. Next, the jack of diamonds, on which Y discarded, but which B, himself, was forced to trump. He then had to lead trumps right up to Y—from eight-five to nine-seven, so that Y captured both rounds. B thus made but two-odd spades.

Of course, if in arranging the hand he had taken for himself both the nine and eight of spades, and also the jack and ten of hearts (leaving absolutely nothing in Y's hand) he could have made his three spades—but that wouldn't have been thanks to the one-double. Also, I might have said "Four clubs"—my honors protecting my one-trick loss. And taking the hand as it really lay, it is a splendid example of the way to accomplish legitimately that which the one-double seeks to accomplish illegitimately. With A's hand, he can make three-odd diamonds against any attack in the world, provided he has enough sense to part with his own high trumps in order to establish dummy's ten and eight.

True, he would be uncomfortably forced by the clubs, but he could afford it. The most probable blind-lead would be the eight of clubs, which Z would take and return; A's trumps would be forced by every club-lead after the first—in spite of which he can make three diamonds or defeat any higher adverse bid. And by no combination of false bids can he arrive at a declaration which will pay him as well as his plain and obvious one.

I constantly hear one-doublers criticizing each other for hands that fail. "You hadn't the cards to double a one no-trump," they will cry; and then, a few moments later, they themselves go gaily to doubling on hands that are as light, or lighter. It is very hard to persuade them to commit themselves specifically as to the make-up of a legitimate one-double (if there could be such a thing); but if you ever do pin them down, *the hand that they will show you is invariably a strong two no-trumper.*

That, in all possible cases, is my own favorite bid against an adverse one no-trump. When I sit on the proper side (and sometimes when I don't), and when I have the material, there is no bid that I love better than two no-trumps against one. The rubbers that this bid has won for me! The other rubbers that it has saved for me! The partners that have called it blessèd, because it didn't shove on to them a responsibility that they were unable to assume!

WHEN I BID TWO NO-TRUMPS AGAINST ONE, I'M ALWAYS WILLING TO PLAY THEM. That is the great beauty of the bid—its honesty. NEVERTHELESS, IF MY PARTNER HAS A POOR HAND AND ANY FIVE-CARD SUIT HEADED BY AN HONOR, I WANT HIM TO OVER-CALL WITH THREE IN THAT SUIT. And that you see, is nothing more nor less than our old and tried friend, the over-call, pushed one point farther. With an impossible no-trump assist, you over-call one no-trump with two in any five-card suit: you've done it for

years: the convention is an indispensable part of your Auction equipment. Very well; go just one step farther. With an impossible no-trump assist, over-call *two* no-trumps with *three* in any five-card suit that is headed by an honor. That no over-call can be made on fewer than five cards has long been conceded; length is the first requisite of a weak bid. *Yet the partner of the one-doubler is forced to over-call on any four-card suit.* Thus it is unsound at the very beginning. Reduce your old-established no-trump over-call to a four-card suit instead of a five, and see how often you'll hit trouble. Very often, if I'm any prophet. *Yet a miracle is supposed to be worked and the thing rendered safe in the case of the one-double.*

With my two-no-trump bid, I stand ready to play my own suit in all cases where my partner lacks the material for a proper over-call. That is its beauty; I *may* be left in, failing a sound over-call from my partner. The one-doubler is not so fortunate; he *must*

be rescued, even when his partner is notably unable to assume the task.

Here is a hand which admirably illustrates the points in question:

Z opened with "One no-trump." It was light, but as dealer I constantly bid it as lightly. Z has a no-trumper or nothing. He has three suits stopped (provided luck is with him) and he may have even four. Opening no-trumpers are bid on stoppers these days. But in the present case, Z has even an "average" no-trumper, in that he holds one

ace, one king, one queen, one jack, one ten, etc. The chance of an adverse bid, or of an over-call makes his bid correct.

A passed, and I do *not* think Y should have said, "Two spades." He didn't think so either, and he passed. Y's spades were just a trifle too poor to over-call, while his queens might help the no-trump hand. So the bid came to B, being held by Z at one no-trump.

A weak player without a spine would immediately have doubled the one no-trump. But B wasn't a weak player, and he had a spine.

He thought it a pity to waste his hand at clubs, on a clean score.

He thought it a pity merely to content himself with defeating a one-bid, which is rarely very profitable.

Although on the wrong side of the adverse bidder, he bid "Two no-trumps," thus proving the color of his blood. B can make four no-trumps—and that is certainly too good a hand to throw away.

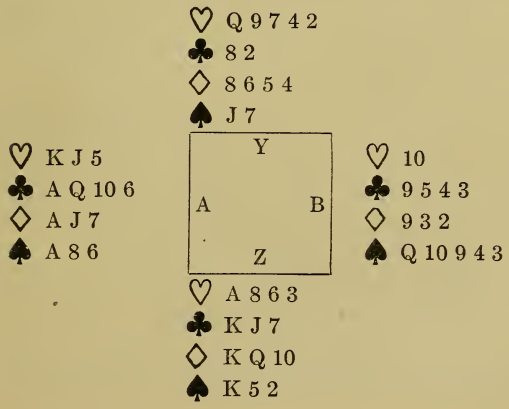
Nevertheless, A (unable to see his partner's

hand) has a distinct duty. His cards bid him over-call with "Three diamonds"—as a warning, and on the proper material. And he makes five-odd. Of course, any five-odd hand is better than any four-odd hand, in that it takes more skill and better cards to win it. B's bid and A's over-call make an excellent commentary on the principles that I have just been elucidating. And the thing which I beg you particularly to note is this: had B doubled the one no-trump, it wouldn't have helped him at all. Y would have bid his diamonds, and either he would have played them and made five, or B would have gone to no-trumps and made four. *Exactly the same things happen without the false aid of the one-double.*

Now, I am perfectly aware that you can sit down and make a hand where the one-double would pay. But even then, you can't turn it honest. And equally easily can I sit down and make hands where every rule of sane bidding will go wrong, where the over-call from no-trumps on five cards to an honor will go

to smash, where raises on solid raisers won't work, where poor playing will beat good, where correct finesses prove more costly than poor ones. I can make a special hand to overthrow every doctrine of the game. That proves nothing. Scripture can be quoted to any end, and hands can be made to stultify the best and most scientific of principles. It is the rule that works *in the most cases* that must be accepted. And these rules that I am giving you, do just that thing.

Another hand will emphasize my points:



Z bid "A no-trump." Should A pass, Y would be forced to call his partner off with "Two hearts."

But A didn't pass. He bid "Two no-trumps," Y passed, B over-called with "Three spades," and scored four-odd. It was exactly the same principle as if A had bid "One no-trump," and B had over-called with "Two spades." Nothing, you see, but our old and tried friend pushed one trick farther—and if the two-no-trump bid is properly made, there is rarely much trouble about that third trick, because the strength lies in the right place. Z's strength lies under A's strength.

A one-doubler, in A's place, would double one no-trump. B would say "Two spades," and exactly the same result would obtain. *Where, then, would be the great advantage of the one-double? What did it accomplish that the legitimate bid failed to accomplish?* True, the latter necessitated a bid that was one trick in excess of the former; "pussy-footing"

would shave one trick from the honest contract; but to my mind that fails to excuse it—rather, it makes it the more contemptible. Nor have I noted a general fear of three-bids that would warrant the dishonesty.

Moreover, should there have been no five-card suit in B's hand (if he held, for instance, one less spade and one more heart) he wouldn't be forced to bid on four trumps, and A could perfectly well make his contract of two no-trumps. Whereas, if A doubles, he can not possibly be left in his false position.

Now, note this point which I am about to make:

When a one no-trump is over-called with a two-suit bid, I WOULD NOT HAVE THE NO-TRUMP BIDDER RETURN TO HIS BID. And equally, when two no-trumps are over-called with a three-suit bid, I WOULD NOT HAVE THE NO-TRUMPER RETURN TO HIS BID. When called off, stay off; that is a rather safe motto, as I think you'll find.

The player who bids two no-trumps against

one, will often find difficulty in getting into his partner's hand to lead. He will be forced to lead from his own strength right up to the adverse strength. This is bad, although on the return volley the adverse strength will be in the same plight, and will have to lead straight up to him. By taking careful account when to win and when to lose, no player should find himself in overwhelming difficulty with a mere two-bid. Nevertheless, this possible tension will be greatly relieved by a three-bid in some suit from the partner of the two-no-trumper—and it is this fact which forms the chief basis for its recommendation. Should it not be forthcoming, however, the plight of the two no-trumper (being free and not forced) can by no possibility be as dire as may be that of the luckless partner of a one-doubler.

One more example will sufficiently emphasize the embarrassment in which such a partner may be placed. A correspondent writes:

"The adversary opened with a bid of one

no-trump. My partner doubled. Third-hand passed, and I was caught with these cards:

♡ 5 3
♣ 9 8 7 2
◇ 8 7 4 3
♠ 5 3 2

"What could I possibly do? My head grew hot and my feet were icy! Expectation reigned. I said 'Two clubs.' My partner, needing clubs, said 'Two no-trumps,' and lost 150. *What should I have done?*"

What indeed! I can recommend nothing but prayer or suicide.

These, then, are my doctrines:

Never double a one-bid. Instead, pass, bid two in suit, or bid two no-trumps. If your partner bids two no-trumps against one and you lack no-trump assistance, over-call with three in any five-card suit that is headed by an honor. Be particularly careful to do this when holding singletons or short suits. (Singletons and short suits will help you to

a five-card over-call). And finally if you, yourself, bid two no-trumps against one and get such an over-call from your partner, never under any circumstances return to your no-trumps.

If you will give these methods a fair test, I think you will soon become convinced of their soundness. I think you will soon come to share my contempt for the cowardly, dishonest, pussy-footing one-double. I have shown you four hands which I think anyone will admit are fair samples of the one-double, *and in not one of them did the convention pay.* In the first, the bid was made on this:

♡ Q 7 4
♣ A K Q J 9 6
◇ A 3
♠ K Q

and the double on this:

♡ A K 5 3
♣ 10
◇ K Q J 9 2
♠ A J 10

The proper bid of "Two diamonds" (against the one no-trump) is safe and profitable. By the false method of doubling, either the identical two-diamond bid is eventually reached, or two no-trumps are played and lost.

In the second example, one no-trump is bid on this:

♡ A 10 7 5
♣ K 8
◇ 10 8 4 2
♠ Q J 3

and the strong adverse hand (*held on the right*) is this:

♡ K J 3
♣ A J 10 9 5
◇ A K
♠ A 9 8

I think you'll agree with me that a bid of "Two no-trumps" is as safe as a "Double." Even the disadvantage of position in regard to the original no-trumper cannot prevent

four-odd being scored. However, with a proper diamond over-call from the partner, and on these cards:

♡ Q 8 4 2
♣ 4 2
◇ J 9 7 6 3
♠ K 10

five-odd diamonds may be scored.

In the third example given, one no-trump is bid on this:

♡ A 8 6 3
♣ K J 7
◇ K Q 10
♠ K 5 2

And on its left, I will bid "Two no-trumps" on this:

♡ K J 5
♣ A Q 10 6
◇ A J 7
♠ A 8 6

And I will certainly do as well with my bid as anyone with his double.

In the fourth case, where the partner of a one-doubler holds this hand:

♡ 5 3
♣ 9 8 7 2
◇ 8 7 4 3
♠ 5 3 2

if anyone can recommend any safe, sane, and honest bid, I should be glad to hear it.

However, hardened one-doublers are difficult to convince. I will therefore devote the balance of this chapter to their guidance, rather than to their conversion—for I think there are some important things about one-doubles that have never been said.

As partner of the bidder and adversary of the doubler, *always pass.* No matter what you hold, pass. Pass if you have eight spades with all five honors. Pass with a hundred aces. Pass if you have nothing, and pass if you have everything. To pass is not to lose your hand. You're *bound* to have another chance. The partner of the

one-doubler is *forced* to bid, and after he does you still may. Or you may have the incredible joy of hearing him bid your own very best suit. The poor wretch may have been obliged to bid it on four cards with a seven-spot high—such things have happened. Then, if you let him play it, every trick you take will be worth fifty, in place of six, or seven, or eight, or nine, or ten. Don't worry because your score is above the line. A hundred aces and eighty spade-honors are scored above the line, but we're mighty glad to get them.

But if it is incumbent on the adversary of the one-doubler to pass, it is a thousand more incumbent on his partner to bid. Nothing can excuse him for passing. If he has a plain bid in his hand, he won't need my advice. But if he hasn't, I have a word to say that I think is both new and useful!

In the case where the partner of the one-doubler (being forced to bid) holds four cards which would prove an actual stopper against

no-trumps, I would have him bid two in that suit. But if his four cards do *not* make such a stopper (as in the case of four to a seven or eight), I would have him bid "Two no-trumps." This should be a signal to his partner (one signal begets another, you see), that he has no possible bid. Upon which information, the partner (the original doubler) shall let the bid stand if he, himself, holds a general hand which recommends no-trumps rather than suit. Then the weak hand need not be exposed, the strong one becoming dummy. But if, on the contrary, the original doubler holds a preponderance of any one suit, he shall immediately bid three in that suit, in answer to his partner's distress signal.

It seems to me that this suggestion so tremendously helps the one-double, and so lessens its terrors, that I hate to make it—*for it doesn't rob the convention of one iota of its dishonesty.* Nevertheless, in proof of my love of fair play, I give it to you for what it is

worth—still begging you, just the same, to try the fair and square game first. Learn to walk without a false prop which may break under you at any moment. Learn to sit up without an artificial brace. Learn to dispense with pussy-footing, and to stand on the side of the clean game,—that game whose first requisite is that *every bid must be playable!* You'll never lose anything by your partizanship on that side! By lending your support to false bids, you'll be harming the game. Before you know it, we'll have an entire new brood that will have to be strangled in order to save Auction's good name and fair fame!

Said a one-doubler to me, "I never double one no-trump *unless I have absolutely every card in the pack.*"

Said I to the one-doubler, "In the case of such wealth, *why fear to risk an honest bid?*"

CHAPTER II

FALLACIES

THERE are three Auction slogans that seem to me to cover two-thirds of the sins that are committed. Could they be weeded out, I think the remedy for Auction rheumatism would have been discovered. The three false slogans are these:

"I must show my partner *something!*" (whether you have it, or not).

"I must show my partner my strength!" (even when that "strength" is actually the most woeful weakness).

And,

"I must trust my partner for *something*, mustn't I?" (regardless of the fact that we no longer "trust" partners, we *listen* to them, instead. In place of hoping, we know).

Under the obsession that it is always necessary to show one's partner *something*, I constantly see players give information that it is absolutely false and misleading—messages that none but a mind-reader could interpret. Under the impelling desire to "show their strength," I have watched them bid on six clubs to a queen—because that happened to be the best thing they held. And under the superstition that they can always trust their partner for *something* (even when that partner has done nothing but pass), I note the unnecessary forfeiture of hundreds of points. But still the slogans hold. Someone once made them, and they can't be killed. However, I'm about to take a turn at them.

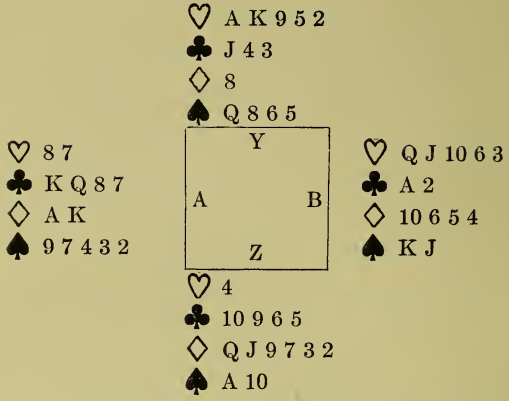
The dealer and second-hand pass. Third-hand holds these cards:

♡ A K 9 5 2
♣ J 4 3
◇ 8
♠ Q 8 6 5

He feels that it would be criminal to leave his partner in ignorance of that five-card heart-suit headed by the ace-king. That would never do. He must show his partner *something*, you know. And then, the joy of that diamond singleton! (amateurs always bank tremendously on singletons).

Third-hand forgets that his singleton is like a spot on his face—it is no good till it's gone. He forgets that an opening-bid from *anyone* must have not only the full quota of trumps ace or king-high, but that it must also have *a quick outside trick* in the shape of an ace or a guarded king. He forgets that in his position of third-hand after two opening passes, any bid will announce really marked strength. He forgets that his partner will bank on that strength in making a second-round bid. He forgets everything except that he must show his partner *something*—and he says, "A heart."

Now behold the entire hand—and how profitable its forfeiture would have been to Z-Y:



Z's pass was correct, A's pass was correct, and Y's pass would certainly have been correct. B has an opening no-trumper, but certainly not a fourth-hand one. So, had Y been wise, the hand would have died.

However, Y bid "A heart," and B passed with joy. Z might have passed—believing (as he had a right to believe) that Y's bid was strong enough to stand alone; or he might have taken note of his own heart singleton and bid "Two diamonds." A would then lead the king of clubs, and B would take with the ace and return the deuce. (I suppose

you all know that play. When your partner leads a king and you hold ace-small, you always take his king and return your small. You do this against no-trumps in order to unblock; and you do it against declared trumps to show that you want to ruff the suit. The only case in which you do *not* do it, is against a declared trump when you have no trumps with which to take the ruff, or when your trumps are such that you don't want to use them in ruffing. *Never ask for a ruff unless you want to take it*).

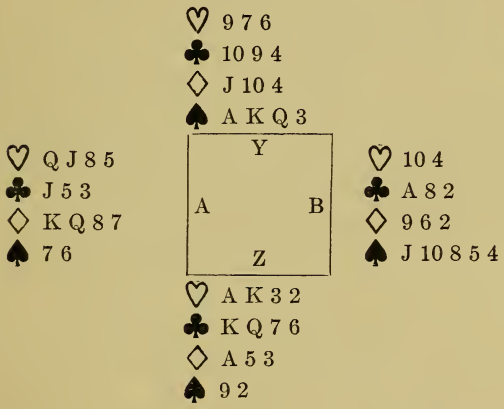
A takes B's deuce with his queen and returns his seven, which B ruffs. B now cannot lead hearts up to strength ("*through* strength, *up to* weakness"), he has no clubs, his spades forbid touching, so he leads a trump to dummy's weakness. A takes, and returns his fourth club which B ruffs. Five tricks in, for A-B, and A still holds the highest trump. Z's one piece of luck is that he can get a spade discard on one of dummy's hearts. While he is beaten, he is not beaten

badly. *Z's rescue bid saved the terrific disaster invited by Y's free bid, and by his desire to show his partner something.*

The second false slogan is, "I must show my partner my strength."

A dealer opened with "One no-trump." Second-hand passed, and third-hand said "Two spades." Fourth-hand passed, and the dealer, believing himself to have been called off, stayed off—most wisely. Anyone should play spades in preference to no-trumps, the sole exception being the holding of a hundred aces. No one should return to no-trumps after a call-off. No one should interfere with a good spade-make in his partner's hand unless he holds: no spades at all, or a singleton: or a hundred aces: or high honors in hearts. And certainly if third-hand's over-call were made from weakness instead of strength, the dealer was right to accept the warning. Therefore, the bidding on this hand closed at "Two spades"—the adversaries both sitting silent.

All this have I told you without showing you the cards, because in the original hand and up to this point, no player had seen any cards save his own. He had nothing but his inference to guide him. Now let us take a look at the entire hand:



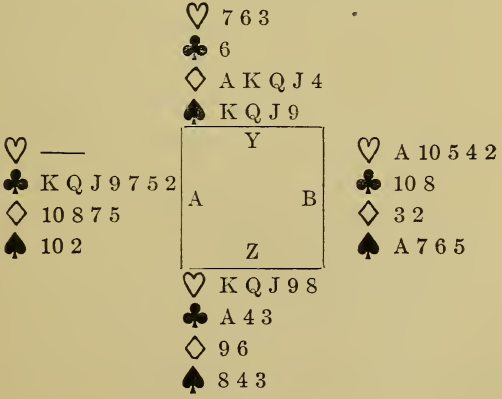
Z's opening no-trump bid was eminently correct. So was A's pass. *Had Y held one more spade, he should have over-called from weakness.* Holding but four, he should never have mentioned them. What he thought he was doing (from his own account) was show-

ing his strength, *and he expected Z to go back to no-trumps.* Just notice the idiocy of the idea! If Y wanted Z to play no-trumps why didn't he let him alone when he was just about to do it? The only reason for a player's calling his partner off no-trumps, is the firm belief that he shouldn't play them—either because they are dangerous or because something else will be more profitable. But to call him off in order that he may go back (with a raised bid) is about the silliest thing I ever heard.

At no-trumps, Z would have gone game—thanks to the three tricks in Y's hand. The first lead would almost certainly have been the seven of diamonds. Dummy's ten would have taken, thus giving Z two rounds of diamonds. He would have led the clubs from dummy, hoping to find the ace just where it was, and thus making both his king and queen. Two rounds of clubs, two of diamonds, two of hearts, and three of spades would have spelled game-in-the-hand.

Playing spades, Y was forced to lose two rounds of trumps, one of clubs, two of diamonds, and one of hearts. As the book against him was five, he went down one trick —where his partner would have gone game. But Y insisted that he was right to "show his strength," and also that his partner was wrong not to return to the suit from which he had been definitely called.

Here is a hand on which, not only the original Y, but every pupil to whom I have since given Y's hand, has insisted on "showing his strength" in this same senseless way:



Z bids, "A heart," having just the one necessary trick outside his trumps. In B's place, I find that some players prefer to pass rather than make a first-round bid on trumps alone, while others prefer to bid the clubs. The latter course seems to me more correct for two reasons: A's heart-shortage, and the fact that his is not the opening bid, and is therefore excusably made on nothing save trumps—and a great many of them.

Now comes the crux, in Y's bid. If A has passed, Y should give a pre-emptive raise in hearts; and if A has bid, Y should certainly raise hearts. He has three trumps to add to his partner's minimum of five; he has "a trick" in his ace of diamonds; he has one raiser in his club singleton; he has another raiser in his king of diamonds, and still another in his king of spades. Also, though queens and jacks are not raisers, both Y's diamonds and his spades promise much more than the first or second rounds. Strictly speaking, Y should raise his partner's heart-

bid to "Four hearts" at least, if it becomes necessary. HE SHOULD NOT AS MUCH AS MENTION HIS DIAMONDS. To do so, would be a backward bid—denying heart-strength. It would therefore be eminently false information. INSTEAD OF BEING A DECLARATION OF STRENGTH, IT WOULD BE A DECLARATION OF WEAKNESS AND A NEGATION OF HEART-HELP!

Yet every unskilled player who holds Y's cards wants to bid diamonds once, at least, "to show his strength"; he always points out that he "can go back to hearts later." He forgets that there may be no "later." He forgets that first to deny heart-help and then to announce it is a messy method of conveying information, and one that may well prove puzzling.

Honors in a minor-suit never make perverted bidding excusable!

Isn't it a mighty good thing to have a strong side-suit all ready and waiting when trumps are exhausted? *And isn't it better to have diamonds for a side-suit and hearts for trumps, than to have hearts for the side-suit and*

diamonds for trumps? If Y raises Z's hearts, every diamond round that his hand takes will be worth eight; by making diamonds trumps, every round of the suit would be worth but seven. In other words, by bidding his diamonds against his partner's hearts, *Y deliberately lowers every trick in his hand one point.*

And finally: *Z doesn't care one iota WHAT his partner's strength is: all that interests him is that it exists!* Whether it be a singleton ace and five trumps, or a chock-a-block diamond-suit with something on the side, or the three highest spades and again something on the side—what should Z care? All that he wants to know is how many raisers for hearts his partner holds; and if Y bids diamonds, Z will certainly believe that he holds none.

Thanks to Y's cards, Z can make five-odd hearts—in spite of B's rather appalling array of trumps. Yet amateur Y's are always eager to "show their strength," and thus to warn experienced Z's to keep away from that profitable heart-suit!

The third false slogan which I have mentioned is mistaken trust: "I must trust my partner for *something*, mustn't I?"

Most certainly not. You are not bidding your partner's hand: he is. If you bid it first (in your bid), and he bids it afterward (in his raise), there'll be trouble as sure as fate—for the reason that those tricks of his can't take twice and therefore mustn't be counted twice. TRUST YOUR PARTNER FOR NOTHING BUT ONE POSSIBLE TRICK, UNLESS HE TELLS YOU SPECIFICALLY THAT HE HAS MORE. There are rules for raising: there are rules for bidding: your partner knows them as well as you, and he has a tongue in his head. If he doesn't use it, take it for granted that he has a reason for his silence; and if you want to know whether he has help for you, instead of "trusting" him blindly give him a chance to use that tongue of his. Then you'll know where you stand. The days of haphazard wishbone Bridge are dead; the days of scientific back-bone Bridge have succeeded them.

Therefore, to summarize:

Remember that bidding is now a privilege and no longer an unavoidable bugbear. Don't feel it necessary to show your partner "something" unless you really have something worth showing. Don't expect him to be a mind-reader, capable of successfully translating messages in gibberish. Don't show him your "strength" (specifically) unless it is better than his; in all other cases merely make a general announcement of strength by raising his bid. The only thing which it is incumbent on you to announce specifically is *weakness;* this you do by passing, or by an over-call—provided you have the wherewithal for such an over-call. And finally, trust your partner for *nothing* (except one possible trick) unless he tells you he has more. Take care of your own tricks, and let him take care of his. This is both common sense and scientific team-work, and when you have mastered its use your partners will rise up and call you blessèd.

There is another fallacy which I am constantly forced to combat, and that is the belief that when a player wins the first trick against a declared trump (his partner having been the leader) he must immediately return the suit. As a matter of fact, he must never do so—except in a few rare cases. He must show his own suit, or (having none) he must lead up to dummy's weakness; then later, when the lead is once more his, he must return his highest card of his partner's suit. But to do so immediately would be to give false information: it would announce one of two things—that he had no more of the suit and wanted to ruff it, or that he had so many that he was sure that his partner had led short.

Against no-trumps, when you win the first trick (your partner having led) you must immediately return your highest card of that suit. This is the rule—though there are exceptions. And generally speaking, whatever is true in no-trumps is untrue in declared

trumps. Therefore, it is perfectly logical that when your partner leads against declared trumps and you take the trick, you must *not* immediately return the suit—though, again, there are exceptions.

The exceptional times when you don't return his lead against no-trumps, are those when your own suit is obviously very much better, and those when his is rendered impossible by dummy's holdings—as when your partner has led fourth-best from a king, and the ace-queen lie in dummy immediately over him. To return his suit under such circumstances would be ridiculous; far better to keep throwing the lead into dummy, by means of other suits, hoping that eventually your partner's suit may be led up to him from that ace-queen hand. Remember, the mere fact that dummy (or the other adversary), holds the commanding card of your partner's suit should not deter you from returning it; until that card is drawn, your partner's suit is no good. NOT THE COMMANDING CARD,

BUT A COMMANDING COMBINATION OF CARDS which will behead your partner's honors and leave the suit still established against him, is the excuse for refusing to return his original lead against no-trump.

Against a declared trump, on the other hand, it is impossible to establish, and make, a long suit—for the reason that the adversary will ruff it. Therefore, all methods are different. When your partner leads against any declared trump and you take the first trick, you do *not* immediately return the suit except in three cases: when you have held but those two cards of the suit and can ruff a later round: when you (or dummy) have so many cards in the suit that you are sure your partner must have led short: and when dummy's holdings make any other lead prohibitive. In all other cases, you preferably show your own suit (just as you would if it were an original lead), or lead up to weakness in dummy. If dummy's weakness be trumps, be sure to lead trumps. Too

many players neglect this golden opportunity. They seem to think that no one but the declarant is allowed to lead trumps. Lead trumps up to weakness, lead some other suit up to weakness, or show your own suit. Then later, when you are in again, return the highest card you hold in the suit which your partner has originally led. And that is the difference between playing against a declared trump, and against no-trump.

The old Whist adage: "Second-hand low, third-hand high, fourth-hand take it if he can," has established a hang-over among certain Auction players—who imagine that this rule still holds in the more modern game. It does not. The open hand changes all that. Too many good Whist rules make poor Auction rules, and this is one of them. In fact, it isn't an Auction rule at all, but an Auction error.

So too, with the return of a trump lead. In Whist, if your partner leads trumps, you must certainly lead them back. In Auction,

this is again changed by the open hand. One adversary leads trumps up to obvious weakness—which is right. His partner, by returning them, would lead them up to announced strength—which would be wrong. Only in a few cases—such as those when it is necessary to kill a ruff in the weak hand (dummy) is it incumbent upon a player to return his partner's trump lead.

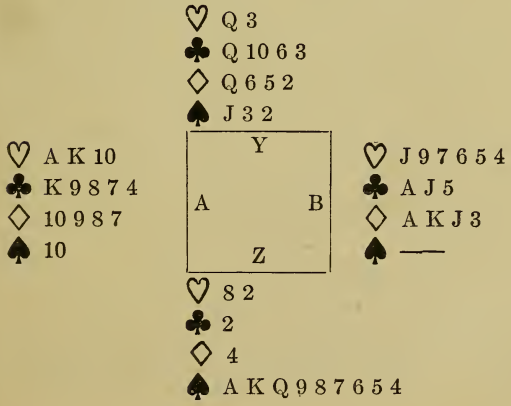
The opening two-bid is one of the most obvious of fallacies. In the first place, it is a fallacy to suppose that it will "shut out" adverse bids, for it won't. Players bid just as blithely against a two-bid as against a one-bid—and sometimes even more blithely, because of the information the two-bid has given them. The next time you play, just notice how many two-bids really pre-empt. Anything that doesn't pre-empt isn't pre-emptive; so there's a fallacy at once.

On those occasions when the adversaries don't bid against a two-bid, they probably weren't going to bid against a one-bid; so

the pre-emptive bid wasn't necessary. Either it isn't effective and doesn't work, or it wasn't necessary and had no excuse. In all cases it gives specific information to the adversary, while in some cases it is a terrible inconvenience to the partner. So why use it?

But the worst of an opening two-bid, is that as long as it exists it is bound to have different meanings with different players—tending to confusion and to localisms. Properly bid, it should mean: "I *must* play this suit and no other. Partner, don't interfere with me! You have no duties and no rights. I'm playing Solo. You're a dead man. I'm being very clever and blocking the adversaries. *There's a suit I'm very much afraid of, and I don't want them to guess it.*" Then the adversaries, not being dead men and having ears to hear, promptly look at their hands, discover a long seven- or eight-card jack-suit (which they would otherwise have been powerless to bid on the first round), recognize it as the bugbear of the pre-emptive bidder,

bid it in defiance of all rules, and score an otherwise impossible victory. That is what a proper two-bid (or three-bid) means, and that is what it does. In proof of this, let me show you a hand which was originally played at a garden party on the grounds of Government House at Nassau, Bahamas. I have already put this hand into print, but it has occasioned so much comment and it is so valuable an argument against pre-emptive bids, that I trust I may be pardoned for referring to it once more:



Z opened with "Three spades" *to shut out hearts*. I was B, and I bid "Four hearts" on six trumps jack-high, because Z had practically invited me to. He had announced that he didn't hold the high hearts (if he'd had them, he wouldn't have been afraid of them); it was an even toss whether they were held by my partner or by Y, and I determined to risk it. Against a pre-emptive bid I always bid my hand a trick or two in excess of its value. And in this case I made a grand slam of which I should never have dreamed, but for the information so obligingly given by Z.

You see, when pre-emptive bidders possess universal strength they know they can always get the play of the hand, so they don't bother with shut-out bids. It's only when they're afraid of something that they try to block it. It doesn't seem as if anything so naïve could work more than once; unless adversaries were phenomenally obliging, it couldn't.

However, if pre-emptive bids were universal in their meaning I should have no

particular quarrel with them. I shouldn't use them, but I could tolerate them. It is when they engender localisms, when they mean one thing here and another thing there, that my patience is exhausted and the game is spoiled.

There are still those who bid two to show "lack of tops." That was all very well in the days of the forced bid when we had to do the best we could with what we had, and when the great boon of passing was still waiting in the future. But as things are now, why bid a suit that lacks its tops, unless against an adverse bid—that is to say, on the second round? True, there are some phenomenal hands (like that which I have just shown) where a topless suit finds its commanding cards all lying in the partner's hand, and goes game or slam. But taken in the large, a suit that is queen- or jack-high is not a suit that promises game. It is therefore a suit that we are willing to relinquish, *providing our adversaries do not bid.* If they

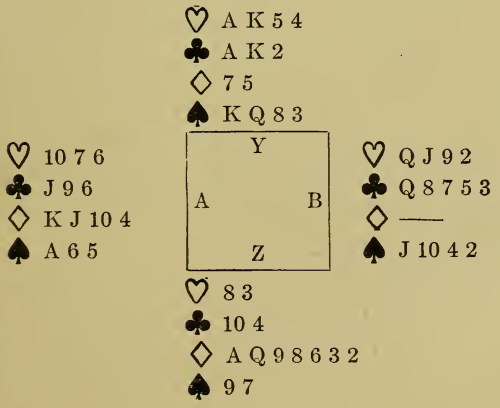
bid, that is another story. We'd rather take a partial game than let them take one; we'd rather take a partial game than let them go game; we'd rather force them than let them play an easy one-bid; we'd rather lose the odd than the game; we'd rather lose two or three-odd than the rubber. So we bid our topless suit *on the second-round*, because the adversaries wouldn't let the hand die, and because (being a late bid) it won't fool our partner as to raises.

Still worse is the idea that if a player hold a long suit (headed by the ace) *and nothing else in his hand*, he should bid two in that suit so that his partner, knowing it to be protected, may go to no-trumps. (Note the difference between this conception and that other which makes the two-bid prohibitive to no-trumps and to any bid from the partner. How distinguish the one from the other?)

This is really very bad. All long weak hands should be saved for second-round bids and gladly forfeited if there should be no

second round. Hands may be weak in two ways: in trumps, or in side-suit. A hand that has long trumps (even with ace-king at the top) and no side trick whatever, is a weak hand and should be bid on the second round. Also, a hand which has side-suit but long weak trumps (queen- or jack-high) should be passed on the first round, unless an adversary's bid has released it.

See how disastrous may be this opening of "two" on a long weak suit and as an invitation to no-trumps:

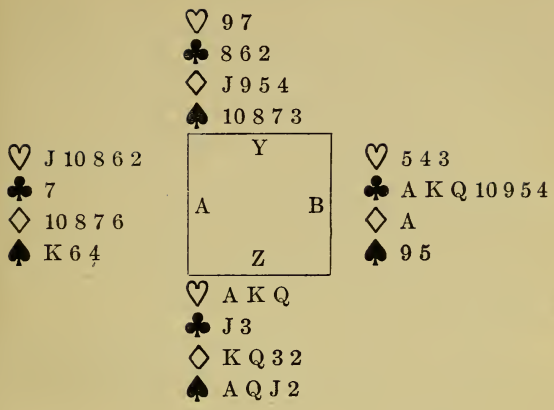


Z opened with "Two diamonds," to show that he had a long weak suit headed by the ace, and nothing else. Also, to invite no-trumps. Y, being another player of that same school, went happily to no-trumps—and to defeat. He took one trick in dummy, and five in his own hand.

Properly bid, the hand should have gone thus:

Z, "Pass"; (his hand, alone is certainly not worth a bid, nor does it permit one); A "Pass"; "Y," "A no-trump"; B, "Pass"; Z, "Two diamonds," (a warning of weakness and danger); closed. Z scores three-odd diamonds, with simple honors against him.

One more fallacy must I note—though this one, I am happy to say, is rapidly losing ground.



Z opens with "A no-trump"; A passes; Y is too poor even to give a warning over-call; the bid thus comes to B, who wants Z to play his no-trumps—*provided there may be a way to lead clubs without delay.* The lead, unfortunately, is not his. If he mentions his clubs (in order to insure a club-lead from A) he will be sure to kill the no-trumps, and he fears that he will drive one of his adversaries to hearts or spades—against either of which suits he might be unable to bid his clubs sufficiently high.

To avoid this, B says "Two diamonds"—on his assurance that diamonds must be protected in Z's hand since clubs are not (one unguarded suit is all that is permitted to a legitimate no-trumper). Also, if Z goes up in his suit (as B feels sure that he will), A will lead his highest diamond and B's brilliancy will have its reward.

This is all very well if we stop right where we are and admire. But suppose we push the question a bit farther!

As Z, I can affirm most positively that I should leave B with his minor-suit bid rather than raise my own suit. You see, I've watched that trick before and I know it by heart. I should feel assured of making two rounds of trumps, three of hearts, and one—at least—of spades. Why then should I worry over B's diamonds?

Left with his bid, wouldn't he have a lovely time?

But, since nothing but actual demonstration will make anyone believe that I

should not bid against the diamond-bid, let us suppose that I do. I will say "Two no-trumps." A has certainly two raises for diamonds; he has four trumps which constitute "a trick," he has a club singleton for one raiser, he has a guarded king of spades for another raiser, and he believes his partner's bid to be genuine. He says "Three diamonds," and Y passes.

B now finds himself the victim of his own false bid. He must say "Four Clubs" as a defense against his brilliancy. Z passes—chuckling; and B is exactly where he would have been had he made an honest bid in the first place.

But A thinks that his partner is using the "Shift"—naming first the higher of two possible suits and then the lower. As the first suit fits A's hand much better than the second, he must carry the bid back—being able to do so without increase of contract. A says "Four diamonds." And it is not until B, in despair, has gone to "Five clubs (and

a double, and a defeat) that A is able to see what has been happening—and then it is too late.

Mightn't B just as well have bid his suit against his adversaries' hearts or spades as against the poor partner whom he has fooled and befuddled? Mightn't he have remembered that he had a partner as well as an adversary, and that to misinform the latter was to misinform the former? And finally, mightn't he have looked just a little bit farther than the end of his own nose and seen where this wonderful brilliancy of his would land him?

Take my word for it, there is only one brand of common sense, there is only one way of reasoning logically, and there is only one kind of Auction worth playing. Until secret signals are permitted, no spurious brilliancy will work against enemies without working equally against friends. When once you are used to real Auction, all these petty tricks seem too paltry to merit

notice. And since the game at its best is a combination of science, sense, and soundness, why should I be forced to plead for it?

CHAPTER III

SOME POINTS

WERE I asked to pick out two of the weakest points in the average game, I should not hesitate very long: I should point to the mad desire to take an early ruff in the strong trump-hand, and to the mistaken conception of a proper club- or diamond-bid on a clean score. The first of these two errors I will discuss in my chapter on the ruff; the second, I will discuss at once.

Inasmuch as one's effort should always be to go game in the hand, it follows that on a clean score, on the first round, and as an opening-bid from any player whatever (dealer, second-hand when the dealer has passed, third-hand after two passes, or fourth-hand after three of them), a club- or

a diamond-bid should correctly be either an invitation to no-trumps, or an announcement that game looks possible in the suit named —mere average help from the partner being forth-coming. And since a five-trick hand is the exception rather than the rule, an opening club- or diamond-bid should generally be regarded as an invitation to no-trumps. On a clean score, the minor-suits are bid on hands that are almost, but not quite, no-trumpers themselves; there is ability, but no desire, to play the suit named.

Never *invite* no-trumps if you should *bid* them. Bid them light. Bid them whenever you can (unless you have something better, in the shape of a good heart- or spade-make); don't ask your partner to bid no-trumps when you should do it yourself. But on those hands when you have *almost*, but not quite, a no-trumper, bid "A club," or "A diamond," *provided that you have a legitimate club- or diamond-bid and are willing to*

play your suit, if left with it. Your partner may not be able to accept your invitation, the adversaries may not bid, and you will be in a sad box if you have made a false bid and are left with it.

On a first round, a clean score, and as an opener, in order to bid clubs or diamonds you MUST hold at least five trumps with ace or king at the top, they MUST total seven points counting every honor two and every plain card one, and you SHOULD also hold enough outside strength to make your hand *almost* (but not quite) a no-trumper. Otherwise, reserve your club- or diamond-bid till a later round, and sacrifice it without regret should there be no such round.

A few concrete examples may serve to make this clearer. In every case it is taken for granted that the score is clean, that it is the first round, and that no previous player has bid.

The following hand, contrary to popular opinion, is *not* a proper club-bid:

♡ K
♣ K J 10 8 6 5 4 3
◇ K
♠ 7 6 5

That is an actual hand which was sent me from Ohio, with a query as to whether it would not warrant an opening club-bid on a clean score. Most certainly *not*. Does it look like game-in-the-hand in clubs—with those seven possible losers? (As a matter of fact, the ace-queen of clubs lay immediately over it.) I'll confess it doesn't to me. Is there the necessary quick outside trick in the shape of an ace or a guarded king? There certainly isn't. Therefore the bid is barred as a genuine suit-bid, and as an invitation to no-trumps it would be a sorry joke. Look at those scattered unestablished clubs, no two of them touching, save the jack and ten. Think how long it might take to establish them, and how the partner's clubs might well be gone before the process was accomplished. Notice the lack of side-re-entry,

once the clubs are set up. The hand is neither a serious club-hand nor an invitation to no-trumps, and it should certainly never be bid as an opener. Later, against adverse hearts, spades, diamonds, or no-trumps, it is biddable. Against a partner's no-trump bid (with no bid from the intervening adversary) it is an obligatory "Two clubs"—from weakness. I should also bid it against a partner's heart or diamond, as an announcement of my singleton. If my partner bid spades, I'd give him my hand in support. I'd even raise him. The king of clubs would be "a trick," and the two singletons would be raisers. However, with only three trumps in the hand, but three ruffs could be taken.

Returning to the possible opening club-bid, I know that many players would be dazzled by those two singletons. Singletons are absolute fetishes to many players. But in this hand, except by unusual luck, they must both count as losers. And when their secret is discovered, the adversaries may well

be five tricks in, and the long trumps won't hurt them. They may even capture some of those trumps. I shall discuss this hand in the following chapter, giving you the entire distribution of the cards. All that concerns us now, is that it is *not* an opening club-bid on any score lower than eighteen.

Nor is this hand:

♡ K 4
♣ A Q 10 9 6 3
◇ 9 5 4
♠ 8 7

Nor is this—for the reason that it is a no-trumper itself:

♡ Q 9 4
♣ A K 8 5 3
◇ 10 2
♠ Q 10 9

Here, on the contrary, is a perfect club-bid:

♡ A K Q
♣ A K Q 7 4 2
◇ 8 7
♠ 10 4

That hand, you see, can play a legitimate club, if left with it, and can also assist no-trumps most beautifully. It isn't, however, a no-trump in itself, because it leaves two suits woefully unguarded. This hand, also, is good:

♡ Q 4
♣ K Q J 8 7 4
◇ 3 2
♠ K Q 2

Here is another beautiful opening club-bid:

♡ J 10 4
♣ A K J 7 4
◇ K 8 3
♠ Q 2

And as with a club, so with a diamond. Here is a hand which was sent me, which certainly does not warrant an opening diamond-bid on a clean score:

♡ —
♣ Q J 5 3
◇ A K J 8 2
♠ Q 7 6 2

Coming to those hands which are not invitations to no-trumps, but which are legitimate club- or diamond-bids *per se*, they would necessarily be big hands to make five-odd look possible. As this:

♡ J 10 4
♣ 2
◇ A K Q 9 8 6 3 2
♠ A

If you make an opening-bid of "A diamond" on a hand similar to that, it is because you want to play diamonds and not no-trumps (*not* however, because of your honors). Even on a clean score, there is a good chance of game, and it is certainly better at suit than at no-trumps. So if your partner, thinking he is accepting your invitation, bids no-trumps, go back to your suit—and your story is told. You should take, and he should then offer, his general strength as support to your diamond-hand, and as a help to game.

A mere legitimate diamond-hand (five

trumps, ace or king high, seven points, and a quick outside trick) may be bid to play when the score is sixteen or over; at that score, your partner should not regard the bid as an invitation to no-trumps. And at a score of eighteen or more, a club-bid may be similarly made and handled.

When you have made these principles a part of your bidding armor, then—and not before—can you rank as a perfect club- or diamond-bidder.

Don't let honors in either of the minor-suits impress you to the extent of influencing your bidding. In the major-suits, that necessarily occurs to some extent—more's the pity—but not in the minor ones. And please don't ever forget the significance of an opening club- or diamond-bid on a clean score. When I'm playing with a trustworthy partner and he makes such a bid, I'll go to no-trumps on one guarded queen and two guarded jacks —and sometimes on less.

I have recently been asked to make rather a

difficult decision in the following case: "What is the best lead against one no-trump, from the following hand?"

♡ K J 4 2
♣ A 6
◇ A Q 6 3
♠ K Q 5

In the first place, I can affirm most positively that I wouldn't be apt to be leading against one no-trump, with that hand. It is rarely very profitable to play in the hope of defeating a one-bid. A one-trick defeat is certainly better than an adverse victory; but it isn't any wonderful windfall, at that. If I held those cards and one no-trump were bid on my right (as it must have been in this case), I should almost certainly say "Two no-trumps"—hoping for a three-bid in some suit from my partner, *but perfectly willing to play my own bid if he could not oblige me.* Four guarded suits: two aces, two kings, two queens, and a jack—all guarded: the adverse strength all on the proper side of me (so that

on all leads from all hands but my own, I should be able to play after it): yes, I think I can fairly say that I should never be leading against an adverse one no-trump.

However, that isn't the question. I am asked to say what card I should choose, provided I *did* lead.

I should certainly make a freak lead. My stock-lead, according to rule, would be my fourth-best heart or diamond—those being my only four-card suits. In the former case I should be leading from a minor ten-ace, and in the latter from a major ten-ace. I should greatly fear leading up to the ace-queen of hearts (in the actual hand, the declarant held the ace-queen-ten), or up to the king-jack of diamonds (which was also the precise actual situation). Both red suits should preferably come to me.

Nor should I want to lead a spade, for the reason that my spades are but barely guarded. Should the declarant hold the ace and others (as a matter of fact, he held the

ace-jack) I should certainly let him be the one to lead the suit—either from his own hand or from dummy. Then I should be sure of making both of my honors.

Could I but make my king and jack of hearts, my ace and queen of diamonds, my ace of clubs, and my king and queen of spades, I should defeat the bid in my own unaided hand. But that would be too much to hope—for the reason that every time I took a trick I should be forced to lead, and leading would prove my Waterloo.

Although all of these embarrassments would be sure to assail me later, for the first lead, at least, I should avoid an obliging lead up to obvious strength. I should lead the six of clubs. Then if my partner took the trick and returned the suit, or if my adversary did, I should be in precisely the same box that I occupied in the first place. Indeed, I might even establish my adversary's long suit and have to discard on it.

Yet the chances in my favor would be

good. If my adversary had protected ten-aces in both red suits and the ace of spades, he must have made his bid on general strength, rather than on a long suit with side-re-entry. That would be my first piece of good luck; and the second might be that I might either hit my partner's suit, or that he would take the first round and *not* return it—leading, preferably to dummy's weakness in one of the red suits or in spades.

My actual choice of lead (independent of the misinformation it would give my partner) would be the ace of clubs—followed by the six, to throw the lead. But it would be too dangerous. My partner would consider an ace-lead against no-trumps a sign of great length or great strength. His one thought would be to unblock. He would throw his king, or his queen, or whatever honor he might happen to hold. Not knowing that I was merely seeking to dodge the lead, he would play legitimately—and between us, we should establish all the declarant's low clubs.

No, much as I should want to throw the lead, I should never dare to make an opening lead of the ace of clubs. The six would be safer. Then, should the suit be thrown back to me, there would be nothing for it but to lead the fourth-best card of one of my red suits—sacrificing the one in order to safeguard the other. And every time the lead came back to me, I should again choose that same suit which I had elected to throw to the dogs.

When playing against the make, we are very fond of giving our partner a chance to trump a trick in a side-suit; but we are wont to pride ourselves on the fact that we would *never* put him in the position where we know that he would ruff, only to be over-ruffed by the adversary. Let me now show you how fatuous is this pride, and how it sometimes pays to put a partner in the very position against which we so guard him.

This hand was sent me from New York

City, by one of the best players and theorists of my acquaintance:

The score was 16–0 in favor of Z-Y on the first game of the rubber—which certainly did not warrant the wild bidding done by B. He wasn't working to save rubber, and he should never have plunged so madly to save the first game. I fear he was one of those inveterate bidders who can never stop, short of disaster.

Note that for Z-Y the suits have no rank, except in the case of clubs. It takes three-

odd clubs, and two-odd anything else, to score game. A diamond is as valuable as a no-trump. Suit, in such cases, even minor-suit, should be given preference over no-trump except in the case of an absolutely invincible hand, or that of a hundred aces.

This was the bidding:

Z, "A club"; A, "Pass"; Y, "A heart"; B, "A spade"; Z, "Two clubs"; A, "Two spades"; after which, Z bid clubs to four, B went to four spades, Z doubled, and the bidding closed.

Now note the play:

Z led the king of clubs. After dummy went down, nine good players out of ten would have stopped clubs (fearing to establish dummy's queen) and would have led a heart to Y's bid. Not so this Z. He led a second round of clubs—Y having played ten to his king-lead. After that second round, Z knew that his partner was out of clubs, but he also knew that B was out of them. Again, nine good players out of ten would now have

switched to hearts, rather than ask a partner to ruff—only to be over-ruffed. This Z *played to kill that queen trick in dummy, and to avoid giving his adversary the chance to discard a loser.* When trumps were gone, the queen of clubs would be a certain trick for B, a trick on which he could discard one of the losing cards in his own hand ("always avoid giving the weak hand a ruff, or the strong hand a discard"). Moreover, there was a sure re-entry in dummy in the shape of that ace of diamonds. Z led another club, drew dummy's queen, let his partner ruff, let B over-ruff, and killed the chance of a later discard. And this he did, in spite of that tempting chance to lead his partner's suit through a guarded king.

Z made three tricks at a hundred apiece on that hand. That would offset a losing rubber, or give a huge winning one. It relieved Z-Y of all worry as far as that particular rubber was concerned. Had this been the second game instead of the first, Z would

have bid his clubs to five in preference to doubling. But on the first game, his adversary's poor bidding offered him a wonderful and profitable chance.

Remember the lessons in this hand:

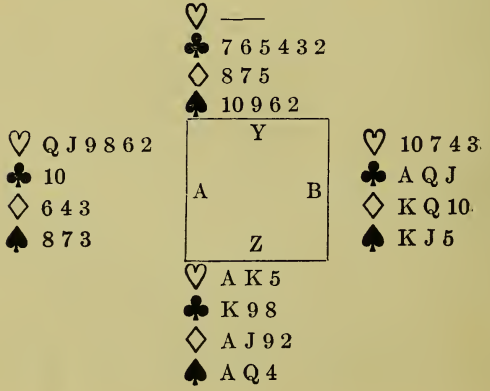
Avoid giving the strong hand discards!

Put your partner in the position of ruffing, only to be over-ruffed, if by so doing you can kill an adverse established card.

When dummy has an established card and also sure re-entry, do your best to kill that card before you relinquish the lead. Once gone from your hands, you may never get the lead back till it is too late.

While on the subject of discard, I must remind you how valuable is the discard of a loser, and how you—as declarant—should never forget to scheme for such discards. Suppose you are playing spades and the first lead is a heart. You have the ace and the six, and you take the first trick. That six should immediately be marked in your hand as with a spot-light. It is the card you hate.

It is the card you must plan to unload. It is the card that will lose you a trick unless you get rid of it before the adversary can again lead hearts. Of course, it is not always possible to rid one's self of such cards; but it is often so, and the chance is often lost. Because there is a rule that trumps should be led early, many players will rush to that course, lose the first round of trumps, and get a second round of that adverse suit led straight back to them. Take this hand (which I have published before, but not to this end. It is too valuable an example to waste):



Z bids a perfectly beautiful "One no-trump" on four guarded suits, three aces, two kings, a queen, and a jack. And he can no more make his one-odd than he can fly to the moon—because of his partner's hand. A passes, and Y makes the necessary over-call of "Two clubs." B passes; his position and his short suits make a bid of two no-trumps unadvisable—and he has no other possible one.

Y plays his two clubs. In spite of the four honors against him, he can score five-odd.

The first lead will come from B, and Z will be dummy. Remember this, for it is reversing the usual position of a diagram.

B will certainly lead his king of diamonds from two touching honors. His only other possible choice would be the poor one of the trey of hearts. It makes no difference in the result of the hand; whatever he leads, Y can take five-odd. We will suppose B to lead the king of diamonds and Z to lay down his hand as dummy.

It is immediately apparent that he has a chance to use the Bath Coup; but it is a chance to be avoided in this case—for obvious reasons. (I hope you all know the Bath Coup, but we are not now concerned with it.) Y plays dummy's ace of diamonds. With nine trumps in his two hands it might be supposed that he would feel impelled to lead them at once—getting into his own hand, perhaps, by trumping the five of hearts in order to lead trumps properly, up to a guarded king instead of away from it. Then, on the first trump lead, B would play ace, and would immediately lead his commanding diamond (playing to save game). By taking two rounds of trumps and one of diamonds, he would hold Y down from game-in-the-hand.

On taking the first diamond in dummy, Y finds himself still with two losing diamonds in his own hand. He should immediately plan to unload them *before losing the lead.* To lead trumps would be to forfeit the lead. Y should lead dummy's two master hearts,

discarding on them his own two losing diamonds. Playing thus, he will never be caught on a diamond round; in this way (and in no other) can he go game. He does it by the immediate discard of two losers.

The discard can also be used as a means of making an adversary unguard himself. By leading your own long suit, you can greatly inconvenience him, as here:

It was a clean score and Z passed (even at that score he might have hoped for game at clubs, I think. Two tricks in his partner's

hand and he is safe. But if he bids his clubs, and if his partner goes to no-trumps, Z must go back to his clubs.)

Z passed, and A bid "A spade." I find that in Y's place, some players pass (from pleasure) and others try to force by bidding "One no-trump." If Y bids no-trump B might pass, or he might bid hearts. If he passes Z must positively over-call with "Two clubs"—from weakness. A will then say "Two spades," Y will pass, and B will warn with "Three hearts" (which suit he would have bid on the first round, had his partner been left in with spades).

In the actual hand, after a warning club-bid from Z and a heart-bid from B, Y went on with his no-trumps and played them. Triumphantly, of course, yet it was a poor bid. Suppose his partner's warning had been made on six clubs to the eight-spot. Then what about Y's no-trumper, with its one sole trick in the adversary's suit (hearts) and its very much split spades?

However, Y played no-trumps, and what I want you particularly to notice is the way that A's hand was killed by nine discards on the adverse clubs. He had either to throw away all his spades, thus establishing Y's queen, or to unguard and throw his king of diamonds. He was rendered utterly helpless by the continued discards.

Of course this is a phenomenal hand, and the discards are more numerous than can generally be forced. But the principle remains the same in less theatrical hands: either side can hurt the other by forcing discards of winners or of guards to winners. Either side can help the other by permitting discards of losers that guard nothing.

When your hand is being forced in this way, don't unguard *all* your suits from fear of throwing high cards. Suppose you hold both black queens, each just barely guarded with two small cards. Neither suit has yet been led. You are being forced to discard on one of the red suits—we'll say diamonds.

Three discards must you make. I implore you not to throw first one small club and then one small spade—thus unguarding both your queens. Choose one suit to discard and one to keep. Perhaps your partner's bid, or his play, will help you to this choice. Perhaps dummy will. If nothing helps you, help yourself. Let us say that you choose to throw the spades and keep the clubs. On the first diamond lead throw one small spade. On the second, throw another small spade. And on the third, *throw your queen itself*. Then your clubs, at least, are guarded. Your partner will see what you are doing, and if he has any sense and any spades, he will guard the suit that you are throwing.

Having spoken of the well-known over-call from no-trumps, I have a word to say about a warning over-call from a partner's trump bid. While not so important, not so obligatory, not so well understood, as the no-trump call-off, there are yet hands where

it is strongly advisable—even those where it is the only decent course.

When you hold a singleton in the suit that your partner has bid, it may well be a drawback to his victory. Your partner may have bid on five trumps: with but one in your hand the adversaries (between them) must hold seven. That is to say, there are more trumps against the make than with it. Two trumps in your hand will always give your partner "the balance of power"; he will be sure to have the bigger half of thirteen. But your singleton may prove his Waterloo. True, after the first round he will always pull two adverse trumps to one of his own; but trump-pulling may prove too expensive a pastime for indulgence. Also, he will have to lead away from his strong hand, instead of up to it.

Now, there are many times when you hold a singleton and can not warn your partner of the fact. Take this hand for instance: your partner has bid "A heart" and the

next adversary has passed; you hold these cards:

♡ 7
♣ A K Q J
◇ 10 8 7 3
♠ J 4 3 2

Poor as you are, you can not tell him so for you have no bid. Moreover, those four clubs of yours may well prove helpful to him; although not trumps, they will probably take at least three tricks—and they may take four. Therefore, though you can not bid against your partner's heart the fact need not particularly worry you.

Again, on this hand (the situation being the same) I would not have you bid:

♡ 7
♣ Q 8 6 2
◇ J 7 5 4
♠ A 9 8 3

Your only possible bid would be "A no-trump" and I should dislike it greatly. It is a terrible risk to bid no-trump when you hold

as light a hand as this, and a singleton in your partner's suit. You are weak enough to need his suit, and with but one of its cards in your own hand you may never be able to establish and use it. Suppose, for instance, he has bid his heart on this:

♡ A Q 9 8 6 5 2
♣ K 9 3
◇ 10 4
♠ 7

Your first heart lead will be to his queen, and it may lose. Then to get into his hand, you will be forced to take out his only re-entry —the king of clubs. You can make the ace of hearts, and by that time, the suit is dead as far as you are concerned. It is established against you.

But when your partner bids "A heart" (or "one" in any other suit), and you find yourself with a singleton trump *and a perfectly possible call-off which, though good as trumps, would make a poor side-suit*, let me

beg you to bid that suit once, at least. As on this:

♡ 7
♣ K 9 7
◇ J 10 9 6 5 4 2
♠ Q 2

Those diamonds, though very useful as trumps, would make a wretched side-suit for your partner's hearts. Make a warning over-call of danger, to show your singleton and your long (though weak) suit. On the contrary, should your diamonds be these:

♡ 7
♣ K 9 7 3 2
◇ A K Q 5 2
♠ Q 2

there will be no necessity for the over-call (your suit being an excellent help, even though it is not trumps). Though still permissible to over-call the heart with the diamond, it is not so incumbent upon you as in the former case.

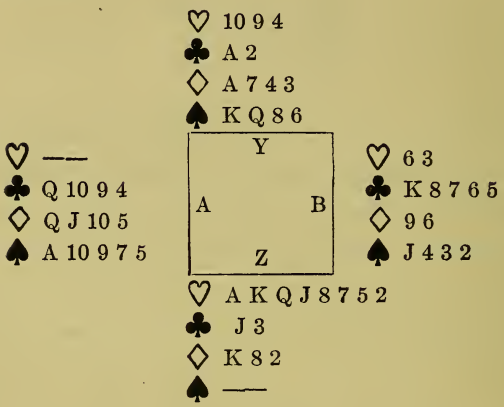
Here is another hand which demands the over-call:

♡ 7
♣ Q J 9 8 6 4 3
◇ 10 6 5 2
♠ A

I have a friend who makes a perfectly faultless partner except on this one head. Constantly will she leave me in my bid when she holds a singleton trump and a perfectly correct means of telling me so. With a long weak suit, useless except as trumps, she passes. Then she always comes forward with the same remark: "I didn't know whether I should interfere with you or not." And my answer is always the same: "You knew something which I didn't know, which might make a great difference to me, and which was perfectly easy for you to tell. Why didn't you tell it?"

There is a very useful bit of subtlety that is often neglected, and that is the voluntary

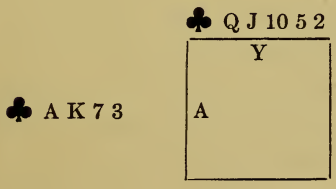
losing of a trick, in order to establish something on which to discard. Here is an example:



Z is playing hearts. A has bid spades once and has had one raise from B. A's original lead is the queen of diamonds from two touching honors. Z takes the trick in either hand, and he is then left with a losing diamond and a losing club—a five-trick hand. After exhausting trumps (leaving himself in dummy on the second round), he leads the king of spades *and lets it go through, in place*

of trumping it—though he knows from the bidding that A holds the ace. On the king of spades Z discards a loser. He then has the queen of spades firmly established in dummy; on it he can discard his other loser. Whatever may be led, he is absolutely assured of making a small slam. Did he trump the spade-rounds the ace would never be drawn, and dummy's spade would never be established. There would be no chance to discard those two losers of his.

Remembering this principle, and reversing it, adversaries should never wittingly "set up" a suit in dummy, on which the declarant may get discards when trumps are drawn. Take this situation: Z may be playing hearts, or spades, or diamonds: A is the leader, and Y is the dummy:



A's correct blind lead is the king of clubs. But the minute he sees dummy he must know better than to make a second club-lead; to do so would be to establish the suit for his adversary. Let him lead anything else. Even if clubs should be led by his adversary, let him lose the trick and retain his ace rather than make all those clubs good on the board.

The lead of king from ace-king-jack is always correct—whether against trumps or no-trumps. But a second lead of the ace (or of any card in the suit) is poor. The first lead is from two touching honors. The second would be from two split honors. After the first round, another suit should be chosen, in order that spades may come from some other hand up to the original leader.

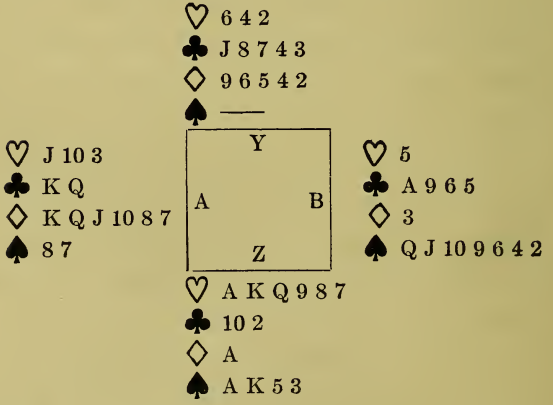
By some authorities, ace-king-ten is considered a very unsafe combination. They strongly advise against leading from it. But the first lead of the king does not appear

dangerous to me. The second lead is the one to avoid—unless your partner should play a noticeably high card on the king; that would look like an echo and a third-round ruff, and would make the situation worth following up.

There is a rule that says that from *any* three honors, your lead is *always* one of those honors—whether against trumps or no-trumps. According to my belief there is no exception to this rule; even in that dread combination, a double major ten-ace (ace-queen-ten), I should not greatly fear the first lead of the ace. Of course, I'd rather lead another suit if I could; but if forced to choose the ten-ace suit, I should lead my ace and see what developed—what dummy showed, what my partner played to the trick (encouragement or discouragement) and so on. But I have never found anyone else ranking as an authority who will commit him- or herself, orally or in print, on this head. "Let it alone" is all that they will

say. I answer, "Yes, certainly—if you can. But suppose you're *forced* to lead it. Suppose everything else is worse?" Then I always find I'm growing unpopular, and I never can get any definite answer.

A good play which you would all do well to remember, is leading a low card to trump *while you still hold the commanding card, or cards, of the suit.* Let me illustrate:



Z is playing hearts. A has bid diamonds, and B has made an excellent warning over-

call in spades. He and A have raised spades to three, and Z has gone to four hearts, unassisted. If he uses the method I am about to describe he will make his bid; otherwise, he will be defeated.

A may lead the king of diamonds or his eight of spades. The result would be the same; the spade would be more probable, and we will suppose that he chooses it.

Most players in Z's place would discard in dummy and take the trick in their own hand—being able to do that and still command the suit. Then when trumps were drawn they would still have two losing spades and two losing clubs, which would spell defeat.

Z should immediately trump the spade in dummy *while he holds up the two master cards*. Dummy needs no discards—it would be impossible to get rid of his losers. A quick ruff *in the weak hand* is always a splendid thing. If trumps are drawn dummy will be unable to take two ruffs. With nine trumps in his two hands, Z is practically assured of

exhausting the adverse trumps without dummy's help. And finally, if B has bid spades so high, lacking both ace and king, he has great length; great length in his hand might mean shortness in A's; *not*, however, a singleton, since A has raised spades. Therefore, A can thus be counted on to play spades twice—just often enough to let dummy trump Z's two losers.

Z trumps the spade in dummy and plays his own trey. He leads a diamond and takes. He leads the five of spades and trumps in dummy. He then exhausts trumps, losing nothing but two rounds of clubs.

When playing no-trumps, you have often a long weak suit whose length (in your own hand and dummy's) seems to offer two or three possible rounds, and which is yet rather hopeless looking. I am going to show you what seems to me the best way of managing it.

You are the declarant and the suit is no-trumps. Dummy holds these diamonds:

♢ 8 6 4 3

You, yourself, hold these:

♢ A 9 7 5 2

Now, though diamonds are your weakest suit, their length is noticeable—and in no-trumps length is strength. *While you still hold re-entry in the adversary's suit,* go at those diamonds. It is too late to do it when there is a suit established against you. It is always too late to finesse, or to lose voluntarily, or to attempt any subtlety whatever, when there is a suit established against you. But while you still have a stopper in your enemy's suit, try to make something of those diamonds. Suppose you have the ace-king-queen of hearts, and the ace-king-queen of clubs: surely you can make such obvious tricks as those at any time. Don't rush to

them yet. The enemy's suit is spades; you are supposed to have taken his first lead and to hold still a quick sure stopper. This is your chance to do something with your diamonds.

Lead a middle card—one of a touching sequence. No matter how low it is, lead it. With only four diamonds against you, probably both adversaries will take the trick. (In this hand, I should lead the deuce up to dummy's eight.) Then, after taking the round, they will lead spades, pulling your last stopper. It is now too late to be wily. Lead the ace of diamonds. As likely as not, both the other adverse diamonds will fall on it, and all your remaining ones will be made good. If this does not happen, drop diamonds and go to your obvious suits.

I can not tell you how often I have made this play successfully. I have had partners go into shrieks of laughter over that first diamond-lead—a deuce up to an eight-spot; and I have had those same partners adopt

the method after they have seen how it works.

A recipe for a hopeless hand is to take all you can get. Play like the veriest amateur. Skim off all your aces and kings before you give up the lead. Don't try to establish anything when it is plain that you cannot do it, when your command of the adverse suit is gone, and when the hand is marked as a deadly loser. Take whatever is obvious. Every trick laid by lessens your losses.

Don't double a non-game-going bid, when doubling it would give your adversary an otherwise impossible game (provided the double failed). Don't double three hearts (24) and turn them to 48—and game. Of course if you are *certain* of winning your double, make it. But oh, the "certain" doubles that I have seen go down in woe!

I have often been asked how to reckon losers. Count all guards as losers, and the

things that they guard as takers. If you lack the ace, king, or queen of trumps, count one of your trumps as a loser. Sometimes more than one trump must be reckoned as losers—particularly when the hand is not very long in trumps. But in a long trump hand, I should count but one of my small trumps a loser—and not even that, if I held the ace, the king, and the queen of trumps.

A hand which is not biddable on the first round frequently becomes so on the second—as in the case of all long weak hands. But a raise has always been a raise, immediately or never. An impossible raise has never become a possible one by waiting. Now, however, certain players are suggesting that an all-trump raise (which has heretofore been barred on any round) might allowably be made on a later round, *after the partner had raised himself and thus shown more than common strength.* As for instance:

Your partner has bid hearts and the adversary has bid spades. You hold this:

♡ K Q 8 5 3
♣ 10 6
◇ J 6 3
♠ 9 8 4

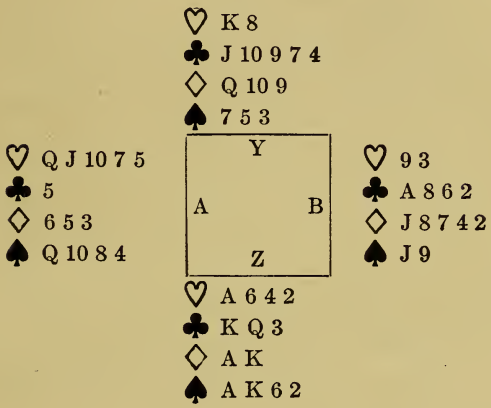
You can not raise, for no one may raise on trumps alone. You have no outside trick, no singleton, and no blank suit—your enemy will lead, and he won't lead trumps. Therefore, you must pass.

But if your partner raises his own hearts, it is now contended by certain players that he shows real strength and that you might thus be permitted to give him an all-trump raise on another round. I am not particularly dazzled by the brilliancy of this idea, nor has it yet become anything more than a suggestion. I merely mention the birth of the thought; should it become accepted, a deferred raise would always be marked as an all-trump raise.

Eight trumps is considered a minimum for an all-trump make—with not an outside trick in the hand. Even with so many, the hand holds five losers. There are those who can not resist seven trumps (and no outside trick), there are even those who can not resist six—but they are weak bidders. Eight trumps is the minimum all-trump make, and even it is far from brilliant. It is a better second-round bid than a first. All weak hands should be saved till the second round. A hand may be weak in trumps (lacking the tops) and it may equally be weak in side-suit. In either case it is a weak hand.

Re-entry: Write that word large in the list of those you must remember. Look out for re-entry. If you have a long suit that needs establishing, keep a re-entry card in the same hand, if possible. Work to establish re-entry. I have seen an eight-spot turned into a re-entry card. I will show

you three hands that will help impress this important matter of re-entry in your minds.



Z is playing no-trumps. In his two hands he has three aces, all four of the kings, and two of the queens. In other words, he holds nine of the twelve high cards. He has a small-slam hand. And yet the original Z made but two-odd—thanks to a mistaken play on the first round. (This, in spite of the fact that some players claim that all

games are lost on the last five rounds. Such a claim is absurd. A game may be lost whenever a mistake is made, and a mistake may be made at any time.)

A leads the queen of hearts, and Z ruins his hand by playing dummy's king to the round—that king which is the sole re-entry for the long clubs and the queen of diamonds.

True, the rule says "cover an honor with an honor." True, again, the well-known course is to play "king ever, queen never" (king-and-one on the board, put him up; queen-and-two on the board, don't put her up). But rules are meant to be used with a fair amount of common sense.

Z plays the king of hearts and leads a low club to his own king. B holds up his ace of clubs till the third round, and the hand is dead to everything over two-odd. By playing the ace of hearts to the first round, Z would have saved his sole-re-entry in the important hand.

Here is another lesson in re-entry:

Again, Z is playing no-trumps—this time with a hundred aces, three kings, and a queen. And again, two-odd is his maximum if he neglects the important matter of re-entry.

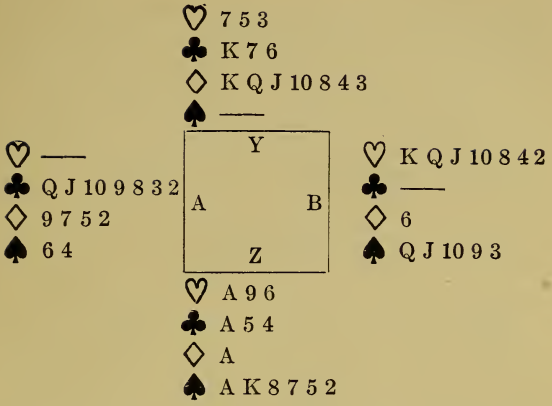
A leads the six of clubs. Nearly all the players to whom I have given this hand have thrown the deuce of hearts on the round. THROW ONE OF DUMMY'S HEARTS IN DISCARD, AND THE HAND IS KILLED. Those hearts are Z's sole hope.

In no-trumps, a fourth round cannot be

trumped. Holding four hearts in each hand. Z is sure of being able to lead four rounds. With eight in his two hands, there are but five against him. It is far more than probable that the adversaries will be exhausted before the fourth round. Dummy's highest heart is one spot higher than Z's lowest. IT CAN THEREFORE BE TURNED INTO RE-ENTRY FOR THE LONG DIAMONDS.

Z must take the club round with his jack, throwing one of dummy's spades. He must lead his ace and king of diamonds. Then he must make his ace of hearts, *and deliberately lose the queen and ten* in order to establish dummy's seven. *He can afford to do this because he still holds two re-entries in clubs*, and can take any other lead that may be made. He makes five-odd. Had he heeded Z's first call-off, Y would have made a diamond grand slam, but the hundred aces would have been lost.

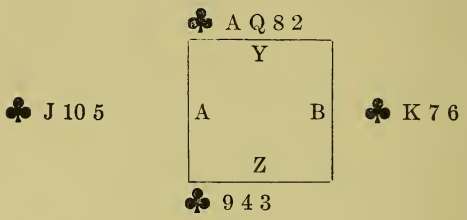
One more hand will be sufficient to impress this important lesson of re-entry:



A hundred aces have deafened Z's ears to a diamond over-call. And it is just as well, for he should have scored a grand slam in no-trumps with a hundred aces to boot—the highest possible score on any undoubled hand. But Z bungled. The lead was the queen of clubs and he put up dummy's king, killing re-entry for the diamonds and totally ruining his hand.

An exceedingly pretty point has come under my notice several times recently. It

concerns an interior lead. I'll give you the diagram, and you must imagine the hand to be fairly well along. Z is playing any suit but clubs. A has just taken a trick, and must therefore lead. Y is dummy:



A's natural play would be to put the jack of clubs through dummy's ace-queen. *By this play he indicates the ten.*

Dummy plays queen, and B wins the trick with the king. *But it is the only trick that A-B take in the suit.* Later, when Z is in his own hand, he remembers about that ten of A's. He leads the nine through it. Whether A covers or not, Z wins three rounds of clubs while his adversaries win one.

Had A led his small club through the ace-

queen, this could not have happened. Z would never finesse down to the nine-spot in his own hand—particularly as he could not read the suit from Z's lead. He would play dummy's queen and B would win the trick. Later, even though Z should lead his own nine toward dummy's ace-eight, he could not possibly prevent A from taking another round of the suit. A would cover the nine, Dummy would take with the ace, and A would be in command. He and his partner would win two rounds instead of one; this extra trick might save game or rubber, or might defeat the bid.

This situation can arise only when Z holds both eight and nine in his two hands. It can arise only when A's jack is *not quite guarded;* (did he hold the jack, ten, and *two* others, he would naturally and safely lead his jack). But I have permuted the cards many times since this point occurred to me, and in far the greater number of cases, I find this to be the case:

If you (as A) hold jack-ten and but *one* other card, it is safer to lead your small card through dummy's ace-queen than to lead your jack. Particularly is this true if the eight or nine lie on the board. It ceases to be true when your own third card is *either the eight or the nine.* I'll admit that the lead of the small card fails to advise your partner as to the whereabouts of the ten. Nevertheless, I have found it to pay. Try it out.

To be constantly, or even frequently, defeated in one's bid is to stand convicted of over-bidding. Never to be defeated is proof of a timid and over-safe game (for it often pays to take a reasonable defeat). Between this Scylla and this Charybdis, what should be considered a good mean?

On a bid that is not forced by circumstances, I consider a defeat of two tricks a maximum—except in those cases where unusual bad luck overthrows perfectly well-made calculations. Of course, in bidding to

save rubber it is often profitable to forfeit several hundreds—provided you do not do it too often. But when the score makes no demands, good bidding should not lose more than two tricks—and not those very frequently. To do it twice is almost to discount one's own rubber, or to swell the adverse rubber discouragingly.

There are cases where one's adversaries get an unexpected and unpreventable ruff or cross-ruff, cases where one's self and one's partner both prove to be weak in the same suit, cases where the cards lie exactly wrong instead of exactly right. And these cases will overthrow really good and conservative calculations. But they don't occur constantly, nor even frequently. Therefore do I repeat that:

When the score does not force the bidding, frequent losses of more than two-odd are proofs of poor bidding.

Make these following principles the foundation of your team-work:

On the bidding rounds, find out whether you or your partner has the more profitable hand. Whichever it may be, use that for the playing hand and the other for the assisting hand. Bid your suit against your partner's only when it is better, or when it is worse and you must make a warning of danger and weakness. Instead of always trying to grab the bid, learn that it is frequently more profitable to play against the make—even when you don't defeat it. You can't play every hand, and you can't score on every hand. Forfeit very little to save the first game. Forfeit two hundred, or even a little more, to save rubber—but when you have done it, try mighty hard to win that rubber. When cards are running hopelessly against you, sit tight and limit your losses. You can't accomplish the impossible, but you can avoid giving big penalties —and the rubber to boot. Never be hypnotized by minor-suit honors. Bid to the score. Don't double unless you have the

book in your hand. Don't double and let the adversary out. Don't double non-game-going bids unless you are absolutely sure of defeating them. Don't interfere with your partner's double unless you have made a false bid, or lack even the one possible trick for which he trusts you, or are sure of going rubber on your bid.

When it comes to the play, lead every suit from the weak hand to the strong. Lead through strength and up to weakness. Play for ruffs in your weak hand and discards in your strong one. Try to keep the adversary from getting ruffs in his weak hand and discards in his strong one. Play the thing that he doesn't want. If he refrains from leading trumps, lead them yourself—especially up to weakness. Lead trumps at any price against an adverse cross-ruff. Avoid establishing a suit for the adversary. Don't forget to use the Rule of Eleven. Count a careful and unerring thirteen in each of four suits, every hand that you play. Above

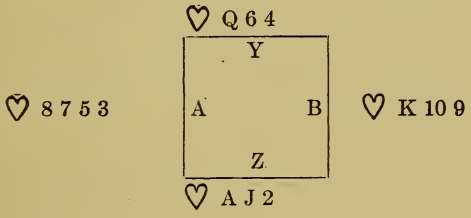
all, play in silence. Do your talking between hands. Don't chatter when the cards are in play. It mayn't annoy you, but it will certainly annoy someone.

As bystander, perfect yourself in the etiquette of your rôle. It is stricter, if anything, than that for those who are playing. An offending bystander is a blot on the landscape—and such bystanders are legion.

Always remember that though you *lead* the higher of two touching honors, you *take* (or attempt to take) with the lower of them. To *lead* the king announces the queen; to *take* (or attempt to take) with the king denies the queen. *Never waste a spot;* take every trick as cheaply as possible. To *lead* the jack announces the ten; to *take* with the jack denies the ten. Generally speaking, the play of any card *to a round already begun,* denies the card immediately under it. Cards that are equal in one's own hand are far from equal in the information they convey. The

only player who can afford to disregard the giving of this information, is the declarant—the sole safe false-carder.

Finesse an honor toward split honors *only* when your next card is a nine or a ten, *or* when you are very long-suited. Being short-suited, and holding neither the nine nor the ten, finesse a low card toward split honors. As here:

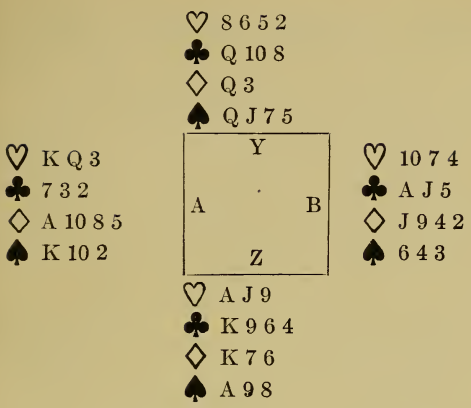


The lead is in dummy (Y). To finesse the queen toward the ace (the usual method), would be to lose the third round, for B would cover. Being short-suited, and holding neither the nine nor the ten, Z should lead dummy's four and finesse his own jack. The finesse working, the king is marked with B.

Z should now *drop the suit*—which B will certainly never lead voluntarily. Just *before* the eleventh round, Z should arrange to have, or get, the lead. *On* that round (*i. e.*, when he has three cards in his hand), he should throw the lead to B with another suit,—having ascertained what taker B holds, and having himself retained a card to that end. B will now be holding the king-ten of hearts, Z the ace-deuce, and Y the queen-six. Whatever B leads, Z will take both rounds—having lost not a single round of the suit.

Never forget, nor neglect, the One-Card Echo at no-trumps. I'll repeat its formula:

When your partner leads against no-trumps, and dummy plays a card that you can not cover, play your next-to-highest. *Not* your lowest—as would be natural, on a trick already lost—but your next-to-highest; this, to enable him to read the suit, and also to unblock. Take this example:



Z is playing no-trumps. A leads the five of diamonds. Dummy plays queen—a card which B can not cover; B's play is therefore the nine—his next-to-highest.

A says to himself: "My partner holds a diamond that is higher than the nine. It can't be the ten, for I hold that myself. It can't be the king, else he would kill the queen. It must be the jack, while the king lies with Z. *I'll never lead up to it;* if my partner puts his jack through that king, it is deader than a door-nail."

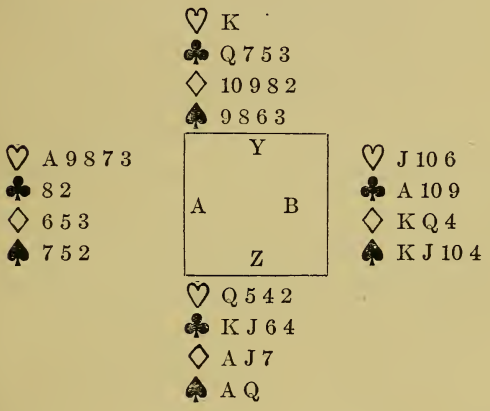
Z being in dummy, finesses his queen of spades toward his ace—feeling sure that he still has re-entry in the adversary's suit. A wins the trick, and his immediate thought is how to put B in. Spades are obviously not the way; diamonds are not; hearts can hardly be—with the king and queen in A's own hand. If B has re-entry, it must be clubs. So A leads his own worst suit. B takes, leads the jack of diamonds, and five neat tricks are scored by A-B on the first six rounds.

Note that if B had *not* held re-entry in clubs, A would be no worse off eventually than if he had led his diamonds up to Z's king. The play of the club can lose him nothing and may gain him much.

But just imagine his chagrin, after planning and working so cleverly should B (on winning the club) return the suit—thinking that A had abandoned diamonds in despair. There would be absolutely no excuse for such a play on the part of B (dummy being so obviously weak in diamonds) yet that is the

way that two-thirds of the Auction players play.

Here is another example of the One-Card Echo:



Z is playing no-trumps (you know, it is only at no-trumps that this One-Card Echo is used). A leads his fourth-best heart; dummy plays king. Should B play the six instead of the ten, he would block the suit and establish Z's queen. Coming in on diamonds or spades, or clubs, he would lead first his jack of hearts and follow it with his ten; Z

would refuse to cover, and his queen would be safe. Should A overtake B's ten with his own ace—in order to lead another round—he would establish the queen for Z.

But by playing the ten to the first trick B (on coming in) leads the jack. Z dares not cover. B then leads the six, and whether Z covers or not, every other round of the suit A-B. Z will be lucky if he scores on the hand.

Assuredly, the One-Card Echo is a "point" that no good player can afford to ignore!

CHAPTER IV

SOME HANDS

THIS chapter won't do you one particle of good if you are going to regard its diagrams merely as little drawings in black-and-white. To derive any profit from them you must positively play the hands. Get, preferably, a pack of small cards such as children use. Get a proper table and a comfortable chair. Then lay out these hands and play them over and over again.

It was in that way that I learned two-thirds of all that I know about Bridge. The other third was learned by playing.

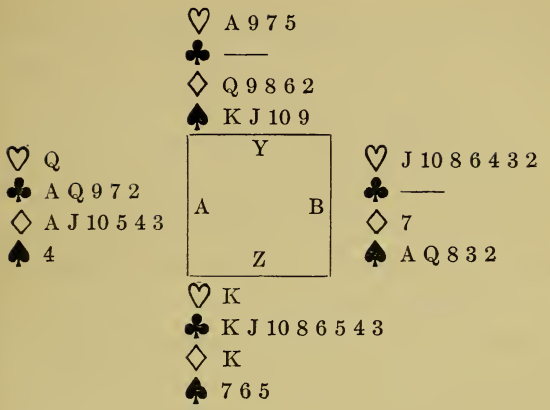
But in the early days of Bridge, I bought what was then the best book on the market, and I read it from cover to cover. Then I worked at the hands in the diagrams. Even-

ing after evening, hour after hour, I devoted to them. Before long, I found myself being promoted to better tables at card-parties, (I had started at the lowest). Soon I was being called to the various tables whenever I was dummy, in order to advise as to make and play. Next, I was turning up my nose at card-parties (the afternoon kind). Then I was teaching, next writing, and by the time Auction came in, I was able to assist in its making. AND I HAVE NEVER SEEN A LESSON GIVEN EXCEPT THOSE THAT I HAVE GIVEN MYSELF.

Pardon this personal digression. Its excuse is my interest in you, my reader, and the interest I hope to make you take in diagrams.

Z, as you know, is always the dealer—though not necessarily the Player.

The following remarkable hand was sent me from Ohio. No score was given; in such cases I always take a clean score for granted:



At no score, under no circumstances, by force of no stress, would I have Z bid.

On a clean score it is perfectly apparent that he has no bid. He has *not one trick outside his trumps*—so that settles the matter. He has seven possible losers. And as an invitation to no-trumps his hand would be a cruel hoax.

The only time that I can conceive of anyone advising a bid from Z, would be when he and his partner were eighteen or more on the rubber-game. Even then it would be sense-

less. No one would let Z get away with a bid of "One club," or even of "Two clubs." He couldn't possibly bid his hand to the point of playing it. Far better to throw it hoping that everyone else will do the same, and that on the next deal he will get a hand that no one can beat. However, should there be bidding Z would still have a second-round chance. He passes, hoping that everyone else will pass. Should he bid, someone else will be sure to.

A bids "A diamond." He has two suits that might help no-trumps wonderfully. He has an ace outside his trumps. On account of his two singletons, however, A would not let his partner play no-trumps even should he bid it. It would be joyful news, for it would sound like general strength. A would then go back to his diamonds, hoping for game-in-the-hand.

Y should pass, and B should over-call with "A heart" or "A spade"—preferably the former, because his hand is es-

sentially a ruffing hand and his hearts are longer.

Z should now say "Two clubs."

I should have A pass. His own suit has been shown to be against him, he likes the adverse bid, and with so many trumps in his own hand he should have small hope of forcing it to three. Y can certainly never raise clubs and B would hardly play against them. Although his partner has not raised his hearts, he might bid them once more himself—or he might go to spades. I should advise the former course; B's hearts would be wretched as side-suit and good as trumps. His spades make a decent side-suit.

It is impossible to give a rule as to how high this bidding should run, who should double, and when. B's hearts make the most profitable bid at the table. Against the lead of the ten of clubs he can go game; against the lead of the king of diamonds, he can take but three-odd. The reason is obvious. If Z leads a club, dummy will

cover, Y will ruff, and Z will over-ruff. He can do the same later with the ace of clubs. It is like leading trumps twice through Y. But if Z opens with the king of diamonds, he will never lead a club after he has seen dummy. And B can not lead one. Therefore, the only club that he can lead through Y will be the ace, and he can force but once instead of twice.

Let us follow the play. The underscored card in the following diagram is the one that wins the trick. The next lead comes from that hand, and you can follow the line and see what each player plays to the trick. Note that after winning the king of diamonds with dummy's ace (holding a singleton diamond himself, B dispenses with the Bath Coup) B does not rush to his spade finesse. He can get that from any hand at the table, while it is only in his own hand that he can establish the ten of diamonds. He leads the jack, expecting the queen to lie with Z, planning to discard a spade and give Z the

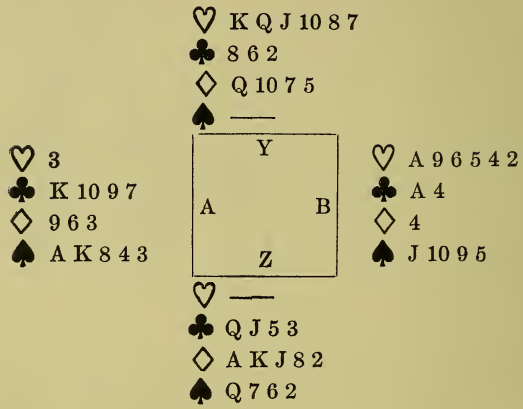
trick. But when Y plays queen, B trumps, and is over-trumped. It would now be a different story if Z had another trump to draw dummy's queen.

	Z	A	Y	B
1st round	K ♢	A ♢	2 ♢	7 ♢
2d "	K ♡	J ♢	Q ♢	2 ♡
3d "	5 ♠	4 ♠	9 ♠	Q ♠
4th "	6 ♠	Q ♡	10 ♠	2 ♠
5th "	3 ♣	10 ♢	6 ♢	3 ♠
6th "		A ♣		

If Y trumps the ace of clubs, B trumps over. If Y trumps with the ace, B discards a spade. He is embarrassed by having to lead trumps up to Y's ace-nine; nevertheless, he takes three-odd. With an opening club-lead he would go game-in-the-hand. No other hand can do as well, except by defeating a bid.

The hand which follows was sent me by some friends in Salem—wonderful players.

I think it is the most astonishing, as well as the most tantalizing, hand that I have ever worked over:



This hand was originally played in duplicate boards, and it certainly caused comment.

Z has no opening bid. He holds no ace nor king outside his trumps.

I don't see how A can shirk his plain responsibility of bidding his spades; yet many pupils to whom I have given the hand have passed it. However, A should cer-

tainly bid "One spade." Whether he does or not, Y will bid his hearts—"one," if A has passed, "two," if A has bid. B has raisers for spades, but likes the hearts—nor can he hope to force them very far.

Z will bid his diamonds on the second round. Then Y, getting no raise in his own suit, will switch to his partner's. Although his partner's bid is a second-rounder, Y has wonderful help. Four trumps, to two honors, a blank in the adverse suit, and a marvelous heart-suit that lacks nothing but its ace.

For spades, B holds three raises. Four trumps to two honors would surely make his "trick," his ace of clubs is one raiser, his ace of hearts another, and his diamond singleton a third. When the hand goes into diamonds against him, he will surely raise the spades.

Incredible as it may seem, there isn't a hand at the table that can go game—be the suit what it may. A-B can bid three safe

spades and Z-Y can bid four safe diamonds, and there it ends.

It is at diamonds that the hand causes the most astonishment. With nine trumps including the highest five, with a blank heart-suit in one hand and a blank spade-suit in the other, with the heart-hand holding all the honors except the ace, and with a protected queen-jack of clubs lying in the strong trump-hand, it would seem impossible to lose more than the ace and king of clubs. But whether the hand is played at a cross-ruff or otherwise, Z simply can not take more than four-odd—provided the adversaries make no mistakes.

A will lead the king of spades, and dummy will surely trump. The next lead must certainly be the king of hearts; Z wants to establish dummy's hearts while there is still re-entry. It would be too obliging of B to play his ace; he'd far better "take it home to bed." Should he play it, Z would trump it. He would then exhaust trumps—land-

ing in dummy last. Then he would lead the three master hearts, throwing all his remaining spades—for that queen of spades, once led through, would look very silly. The nine of hearts will block dummy's triumphal progress. After three heart-rounds he will have to lead a club to his own hand. And even so, he is forced to lose three club-rounds. There is no possible way, as I believe, to make that hand take more than four-odd tricks.

A hand that seems to me a most beautiful example of good bidding is the following:

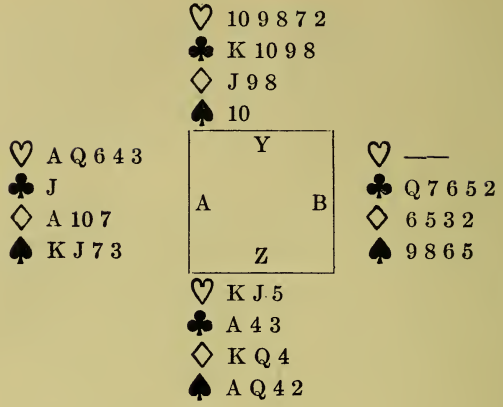
Z bids "A no-trump," and a sorry time he'd have with it—but it is an honest bid. Nor would he be left with it, for Y would over-call with "Two hearts." But he doesn't have to, for A bids "Two no-trumps"; and a sorry time *he'd* have with it, but it is an honest bid. Nor will *he* be left with it, for B will bid "Three spades," which means game. He can make four-odd. Note that had A doubled the no-trumps, B would have bid "Two spades" and one-doublers would have pointed with pride at the success of the scheme. IT IS HERE ACCOMPLISHED JUST AS WELL, AND FAR MORE HONESTLY.

Were Z left with his no-trumps, what would you have A lead? I think he should lead the ace of clubs from that dread combination ace-queen-ten (three honors). Should he do this, B (holding any honor) would throw his highest card on the ace—unless, indeed, he had five clubs. In that case, were his five clubs headed with an honor he would play his next-to-highest and

then down—keeping a card at each end until it developed whether he or his partner had the longer suit; if his five clubs were headed with a plain card, he would play his next-to-bottom and then up.

But the moment that B plays a discouragement club (he plays the trey with the deuce on the board, so it must be his very bottomest) A drops clubs. Neither of his red suits can be touched. He therefore leads his lowest spade. B holds the fourchette over the jack on the board. Z will take that first round of spades, and then the suit is established against him. But as I said before, he wouldn't be left with his no-trumps. The hand is an exceptionally pretty example of sane bidding.

The following hand is a wonder. On its original appearance I was Z, and my partner was a man who plays a mighty good game. Nevertheless, I think he made a grave error in judgment on this occasion:



It was a clean score and I opened with "One no-trump." Everyone who knows me at all knows that I bid opening no-trumpers on air and hope. I have been accused of bidding them on "Two threes and a guarded four."

A made the unassailable bid of "Two hearts," and Y made the mistake of his life. Holding a heart-stopper and an additional trick, he raised me to "Two no-trumps."

Just examine Y's hand. See how long it must be before his ten of hearts will stop the

adversary's suit (remember, Y knew nothing of my hearts). Look at his singleton spade, and consider what an asset it would be if hearts were played. Look at his poor diamonds, and his none-too-good clubs! Consider that my no-trumper might have been a mere opener—that if I didn't stop hearts we might be badly off with a two-no-trump bid, and that if I did stop hearts we might make the adverse two-heart bid look rather silly.

You are not *forced* to raise your partner's bid just because you can. True, you must so raise it, provided there is nothing better that you can do. You mustn't pass when you have a raise and no chance at anything better. But with a choice of two profitable courses, you should always choose the one that promises to be the more profitable.

We played two no-trumps, and I just made them. A refused to lead from either of his ten-aces and made the freak (and very wise) lead of the jack of clubs. I was forced to

take the trick in my own hand, as I had to save dummy's king for re-entry. I led the king of hearts (from the beginning, I had to sacrifice my own high hearts in order to establish dummy's long ones). A took the trick, which I think was bad judgment, for it forced him to lead. He led the seven of diamonds. I took in dummy, but overtook with my own queen; I might need dummy's jack for re-entry. I led the jack of hearts, and A gave it to me. I led the five, and took with dummy's eight. Then the ten, which A took, throwing me in again by leading his last heart. That placed the lead in dummy, and I had my choice between a club, a diamond, or a spade. I chose the club—leading the ten. B took, and led a spade through me. Whether I finessed or not, it was all one. I put up my ace, led a club to dummy, made the two club-rounds, and got away with my two-odd. Played as the adversaries had chosen to play it, there was no more in the hand.

We made twenty on that hand, and aces were easy. Now consider for a moment what would have happened had Y decided to let A play two hearts. It would have been a wise decision, for I had a general hand and Y had five trumps, a side singleton, and a well-guarded side-king. Certainly A had small chance of game-in-the-hand under those circumstances.

Remember, I would not have Y double. Even though in this hand it would have enormously increased our winning, it would have been bad judgment. Y knew nothing of my hand; two hearts wasn't game, and two hearts doubled might have been. Y should merely have passed in the hope of defeating. He should have led his singleton spade.

With four spades on the board, four in my own hand, and a ten-spot lead, I should have put up the ace and returned a small one which Y would have trumped. He would have led a club, my ace would have taken, and I should have led another spade for him

to trump. With so many clubs on the board and A's jack played on my ace, Y would next have led a diamond, I should have played queen, and A ace. He would then have led the ace of trumps, followed by a small one—which I should have won. My next lead would have been my last spade, my partner trumping it. It is obvious that we should still have won two diamond rounds and the king of trumps—making a total of nine tricks. Our book being five, our score should have been 200, plus sixteen honors. Yet when we scored our twenty, my partner smiled in pleasure. "Fine," he said. "I thought my hearts would do the trick!"

Do the trick!!!

My next hand holds a lesson for the no-trump player; it teaches him to establish his long suit while he still holds a stopper in the adversaries' suit—letting his own more obvious and safe suits wait over until later. Also, with a choice of two suits to establish, *he should choose that which can be cleared*

before the enemy's suit is cleared. A diagram will make this plainer:

Z opens with "One spade." He can score three spades—the exact number warranted by the rules of bid and raise.

A bids "One no-trump," disregarding his 64 heart honors because of the shortness of their suit. Y has a bare raise for Z in his two side-kings. Holding two singletons, a long weak suit, and a no-trump partner, B will say "Three diamonds," especially as the score stands at 27-all on the rubber-game.

B can make four-odd diamonds, but Z will cap his bid with "Three spades."

At the score, A should certainly raise the diamonds. But I find, in giving the hand to my pupils, that there is a diversity of opinion on this head. Some double the spades, some pass in the hope of defeating them (a poor choice at the score), and others bid "Three no-trumps." And it is the hand played at no-trumps that I want to discuss.

A can make four no-trumps if he plays correctly. At 27-all, four no-trumps are no better than four diamonds except that they will outrank four spades. Y's first lead is his highest spade, to his partner's bid. A wins the trick—and it is at this point that the weak players fall.

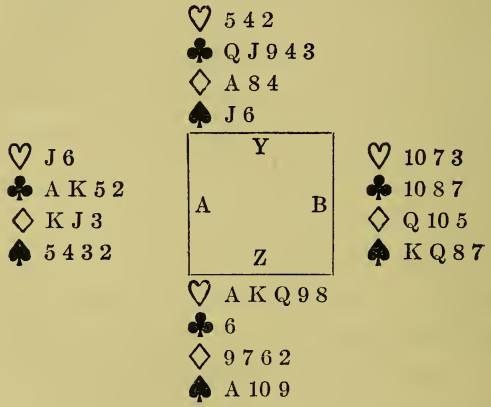
The weakest of them play the ready-made hearts first—thereby establishing three hearts in Y's hand. And as Y has re-entry in both diamonds and clubs, the fat is immediately in the fire.

Better players (but still not the best),

after taking the first round start to establish the diamonds, because B holds six diamonds and only five clubs. This reasoning is good as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. It will take two rounds to establish the diamonds, and after each round the adversary will certainly lead spades. As A has now but one spade stopper left, he must choose to establish that suit *which necessitates but one round of forfeiture*—in other words, clubs. *It is too late to finesse with an established suit against you.* Likewise, it is too late to throw the lead.

I am now about to show you two striking examples of the thing which I think is probably the blackest of all my Auction *bêtes noires*—the establishment of a long, or fairly long suit for the adversary. It is astounding how common is this fault—as common as it is maddening. Before showing you the hands, let me beseech you always to *keep your eyes on dummy.* As carefully as you watch the score, and watch your adversary for errors, and watch yourself lest you make them, you

must watch dummy for what he tells you. From the moment that he goes down on the board, take advantage of his information. Even before following your correct first-lead with its normal second-lead, look and see if dummy bids you do otherwise.



Z has won the declaration at "One heart." A makes the correct first lead of the king of clubs. B plays the seven, and Z the six. It becomes immediately probable that unless Z is false-carding, he has no more clubs; in which case B must hold two more. Had B

held but two in the first place, he would have played "down and out" on a king-lead from his partner—in other words, he would have played the seven, or eight, or ten, following with a lower card on the second round. But when B plays the seven and Z plays the six, it is evident that B can have no card lower than his seven—as all the lower cards show in A's own hand and on the board. B must therefore hold a singleton, or three clubs—unless, indeed, Z is false-carding.

But even if B holds a singleton and can trump a second round, it would be an expensive play—for the reason that it would establish three good clubs for Z-Y; Y holding sure re-entry, his clubs can't be blocked.

If, however, A is determined to think that his partner holds a singleton club and will trump a second round, and if he wants to take the risk of his conviction being wrong, he will lead the suit again; *but he must lead low.* Under no circumstances can he afford to part with the control of so long an adverse suit.

In the case of his partner holding other clubs (and the chances are even) it will prove an expensive choice, for the second club-round will give Y a cheap trick and Z a valuable discard.

The thing need not even be reasoned out in so complicated a manner. The moment a player (sitting in A's place and having made a blind-lead of the king of clubs) sees dummy go down with as good clubs as Y here holds, he should drop clubs, hold up the commanding card, and endeavor to take out dummy's re-entry before the long clubs are established. In other words, *A's infallible second lead should be the king of diamonds*, to draw dummy's ace. Not a low diamond, for Z might hold the queen or the ten: A wants that ace to fall: *when you want high cards to fall, lead high cards.* From that impossible combination of a barely-guarded minor ten-ace must A make his second lead.

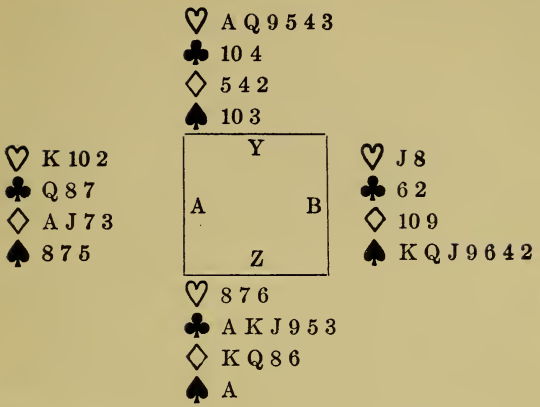
The original A did not do this. Knowing his leads, he led triumphantly, the king of clubs and followed it with the ace—never

caring what dummy had, barely glancing to see. Z trumped the second club, drew trumps, entered dummy with the ace of diamonds, threw all his losing diamonds on dummy's clubs, and waltzed off with an easy five-odd—a gift from A's second lead. Try the hand out with the correct second-lead that I recommend, and see the difference in the result.

Here is another hand that will put a point on this subject while we are discussing it. Though not quite so obvious and theatrical as the first, it still is plain enough to speak for itself:

Z is playing spades. A leads correctly—the king of diamonds. B plays the four, the trey lying in A's own hand and the deuce on the board. There's evidently nothing doing in the way of an echo, so A must drop diamonds and *lead the king of clubs*, to take out dummy's re-entry. A shocking lead, isn't it?—yet a brilliant. In the original hand, A was a really excellent player—yet she followed the king of diamonds with the ace. So, too, have many of my pupils who have since played the hand. Even following immediately upon that club-lesson just given, they have failed to recognize the situations as identical.

Now, under these circumstances, you will perhaps wonder why I so highly commend a play discussed on page 84, where the situation was this:



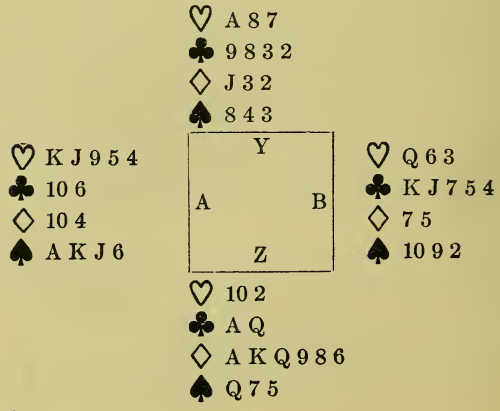
Z has doubled a perfectly terrible bid of "Four spades" made by B, with one raise from A. Z leads first his king of clubs, then (with the guarded queen in plain sight) leads the king, followed by a small one. You may think the case is the same as that against which I have just been warning you—but it isn't.

In the first place, Z runs no risk of establishing a *suit* for A. There is but the lone queen of clubs that might take.

In the second place, *Y has played a ten on*

Z's first lead. That looks very much like a singleton, or an echo. And when the echo is established on the second round, Z leads a third club, letting his partner trump and be over-trumped, *in order to kill an established card in dummy.* B could later get into dummy with the ace of diamonds, and could discard a loser on the established queen of clubs.

The next hand that I will show you will illustrate the mistake of leading a second round from ace-king-jack—a point I have already touched:



The score is 18–7 on the rubber game, in favor of A-B.

Z bids "A no-trump"; A, "Two hearts," and Y and B pass (though in B's place, and at the score, I should say "Three hearts." However, he didn't). Z, "Three diamonds" (to save rubber); B, "Three hearts"; Z, "Four diamonds"; closed.

A led the king of spades from two honors that touched. Then he made the terrible mistake of leading the ace, from two honors that didn't touch. The play gave Z his contract, and the rubber. Had A made his second lead from any other suit whatever, and waited for the second round of spades to come from any hand but his own, he would have caught Z's queen under his own four-chette, and have defeated the bid—a difference of 378 points, plus another chance at an almost-won rubber.

Often have I reiterated the advice, "Don't play no-trumps when you can play hearts or spades." Even when you seem to have

a perfectly good no-trump assist, I would have you over-call your partner's no-trumps with hearts or spades from strength or weakness (*i. e.*, five cards to an honor, or six to anything). Here is a hand to emphasize the advice:

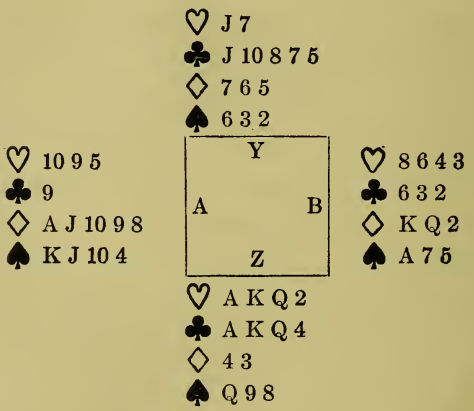
The score is ten-all on the rubber-game. It is advisable to capture the bid by hook or by crook, so Z promptly (and correctly) declares "One no-trump." A can do nothing but pass; and Y, considering that game can be scored with two-odd in no-trumps where it

would take three-odd in spades, passes—as must B.

Against no-trumps, A makes the proper lead of the ten of hearts. Dummy showing that it cannot be from king-jack-ten, B reads it correctly as the top of a long weak sequence. He therefore decides not to return so hopeless a suit—one that would be so long in becoming established—and leads the queen of diamonds to dummy's weakness. A-B take four straight diamond tricks, and they already have one heart-round. After the diamonds, A leads another heart. Z makes two heart-rounds but doesn't dare make the third, as that would clear the suit against him. He therefore leads a spade. B holds up the ace till the second round—which he wins, knowing that Z has no more spades to lead. *Z can not make the odd!* At spades, Y could make three-odd, game, and rubber.

The following hand was played at Palm Beach. Z was a very strong player (not averse to taking a risk), and I was A. My

partner was the weakest player at the table—but one, nevertheless who spends her life playing Auction, and who certainly constantly criticizes others. It was the first deal on the rubber-game, and we were playing for a not inconsiderable stake.



Z opened with "One no-trump," and I answered with "Two diamonds." Z did a thing which I have never either dared, nor wanted, to do: she bid "Two no-trumps" without a diamond-stopper—and this, al-

though the score (and my bid) did not demand it. Certainly, I had small chance of game at diamonds with Z's hand against me.

The bidding closed at two no-trumps, and I led my ace of diamonds ("holding any three honors, your lead is always one of those honors—whether against trumps or no-trumps"). This lead was made doubly safe by the fact that I held sure side re-entry. Should my partner hold one, or both, of the missing diamond honors, I felt that she would of course unblock by throwing her highest card on my noticeable lead: (the stock-lead at no-trumps is the fourth-best card in your longest suit, and a high lead is always a sign of great length or great strength. In either case it shows an ability to take care of the suit, and the partner's business is not to win tricks, but to get out of the way. Only when holding four or more of my suit, is she at liberty to retain her highest. In cases of a four-card suit or longer, she uses middle play, retaining cards at both ends until it

becomes apparent which of us should unblock for the other).

Having known all this from the days of my Auction-cradle and Auction-primer, I took it for granted that my very self-sufficient partner knew it too. I led the ace of diamonds, *and she played the deuce* (both literally and figuratively). I, imagining that both king and queen must be against me (I had felt sure that Z must hold at least one of them, from her bid), was on the point of abandoning my suit in despair, but thought better of it and led my jack. B took with the queen, led the king, and the suit was blocked.

Even then, instead of leading a spade to dummy's weakness, she led a heart to near-strength—her excuse being that she didn't suppose that I could hold an honor in the suit of which she, herself, held the ace; this convinced her that my side-strength must be in hearts or clubs.

Z went game, and will probably go to her

grave convinced that it is safe to bid no-trumps without a stopper in the adversary's suit. So it might be, if all adversaries were as obliging as the B in this hand. B and I, however, should have taken *nine* tricks before Z ever got in.

A very pretty example of the un-wisdom of clearing a long suit for the adversaries arose in another Palm Beach game—but on this occasion, there were no weak players to ruin hands. Again, it was the first deal on the rubber-game, and I was A:

Z won the bid at "One heart." I led the six of spades, which became immediately marked as a singleton or a doubleton. No one leads "away from an ace," and it couldn't be fourth-best from any other honor, for to my partner's eyes all other honors were accounted for.

In showing this hand to some dozens of men—all representative players—I have almost invariably evoked the comment, "I don't like a doubleton lead." "No," I have replied, "nor do I. What would you have me lead from that hand? I *had* to lead something. Would you recommend a lead from four diamonds headed by a double major ten-ace?" . . . "Certainly not." . . . "What then? Fourth-best from a seven, or seven from the top of four? Trumps up to strength from three to an eight-spot?" . . . "Of course not. There isn't a decent lead in the hand." Which is certainly true—and which proves, moreover, that it is easier to criticize than to advise. It must be obvious to anyone that

the six of spades is the only possible blind-lead in the hand.

Dummy played the ten, and my partner made the terrible mistake of covering—thereby doing the very thing that I so strenuously decry, establishing a long suit on the board when there is a sure re-entry.

Of course, B knew that Z must hold the ace of spades and that his own king was doomed to death. He made his play in order to "cover an honor with an honor," and to force the lead into Z's hand, and thus prevent his own king of hearts from being fed through.

But you "cover an honor with an honor" *only* when you *don't* see the ten on the board, or *do* see it in your own hand. In the former case, you hope to make the ten good in your partner's hand; in the latter case, you hope to make it good in your own. When it sits on the board, perfectly guarded, why in the name of common sense should you be obliging enough to establish it for dummy?

Again, while B naturally didn't want his king of trumps led through, he couldn't help it. Can't Z enter dummy with that safe ace of clubs?

And yet again, by holding up his king of spades until the third round, B would force Z into his own hand on that round, when he almost certainly had no fourth spade (certainly not, if I had held two originally). This would block the spades. There would be no re-entry in dummy, for the ace of clubs would have been used long since.

Supposing B to play correctly, he will hold up the king of spades and give dummy the first round. Z can not afford to lead spades till trumps are gone, for fear of a ruff (which he would certainly get from me). He will lead the ten of trumps with a view to finessing. His only other choice would be to try a diamond finesse, which would be both stupid and disastrous at this stage of the game. So he leads the ten of hearts. B, realizing that he can establish neither the ten nor the nine

for himself or his partner, holds up the king of trumps. (Won't this hand be a heart-scald to those players who insist that one should *invariably* cover an honor with an honor?)

The lead being still in dummy and the king of trumps marked with B, Z will lead dummy's nine of trumps—which will likewise win. He will then get into his own hand with the king of clubs (or by overtaking his nine of trumps) and pick up the two remaining adverse trumps. Then those spades must once more be finessed through B, *and the only way to get into dummy is with the ace of clubs.* This play Z makes. He leads the queen of spades, and B ducks. He leads another spade, B covers perforce, and Z takes. *But the spades are blocked, and the ace of clubs is gone.* B must lead diamonds from his own hand, and he loses three tricks; A takes the first diamond, leads a club, Z trumps and must lead another diamond.

There could not possibly be more than four-

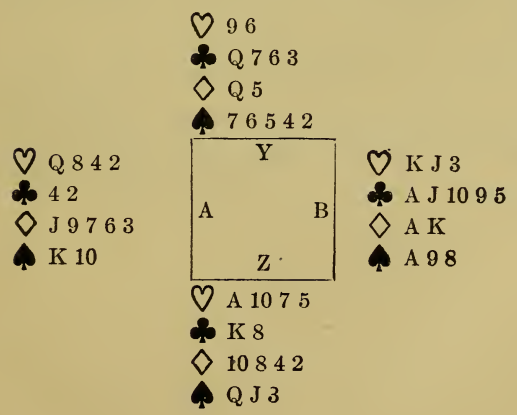
odd in the hand for Z, did B hold up both his kings until the third round—steadily refusing to cover an honor with an honor, steadily refusing to establish a long suit on the board. Even though Z, after the second club-lead (on which he plays dummy's ace) should lead a third round in order to "ruff out the suit," it would do him no good—for he couldn't get into dummy to make his fourth club. He can't finesse hearts, finesse diamonds, establish and make his spades, and ruff out clubs, all at one and the same time.

The original B covered an honor with an honor, both in spades and in trumps. Z made an easy grand slam—seven-odd in place of four. The two king-plays cost exactly 124 points—half a rubber-value!

I consider this hand a very subtle test. Give it, as a closed hand, to those of your acquaintances whom you consider strong players. Put in B's place the men you specially want to try out, and see how many of them will hold up both those kings until

the third round! Yet the two principles that guide the play are as simple as they are strong: DON'T ESTABLISH A LONG SUIT FOR THE ADVERSARY; and, COVER AN HONOR WITH AN HONOR WHEN YOU DON'T SEE THE TEN ON THE BOARD, OR DO SEE IT IN YOUR OWN HAND! In all other cases use your wits, and don't be a slave to the first half of an unfinished rule.

As a final example, I shall discuss at greater length a hand already given in the chapter on the one-double. This is it:



Z bids "One no-trump." A and Y pass, Y's spade-over-call being a shade too light and his two queens promising a little no-trump support. B, being a legitimate. bidder, says "Two no-trumps." Z passes. Although B can easily make four no-trumps, A does not know this; and he does know that his hand demands a bid. He says "Three diamonds." Against any lead and any form of attack, he should make five-odd. He must, however, be careful to *keep the lead in dummy at the end of the hand.* His only losses should be the heart-ace and the club-king.

Y has two choices of lead—the trey of clubs and the nine of hearts: we'll follow them both: the card that wins the trick is underscored:

	Y	B	Z	A
1st round	3 ♣	9 ♣	K ♣	2 ♣
2d "	2 ♠	8 ♠	Q ♠	K ♠
3d "	5 ♢	K ♢	2 ♢	3 ♢
4th "	Q ♢	A ♢	4 ♢	6 ♢
5th "	6 ♡	3 ♡	5 ♡	Q ♡
6th "	6 ♣	10 ♣	8 ♣	4 ♣
7th "	7 ♣	A ♣	7 ♡	2 ♡
8th "	Q ♣	5 ♣	10 ♡	7 ♢
9th "	9 ♡	J ♡	A ♡	4 ♡

Then, no matter what Z leads, A takes the balance of the tricks. (N.B. on the ninth round, A has purposely thrown the lead when he had an *uneven* number of cards in his hand.)

Here again, is the same lead from Y, but a different return from Z:

	Y	B	Z	A
1st round	3 ♣	9 ♣	K ♣	2 ♣
2d "	5 ♢	K ♢	2 ♢	3 ♢
3d "	Q ♢	A ♢	4 ♢	6 ♢
4th "	2 ♠	8 ♠	J ♠	K ♠
5th "	6 ♣	10 ♣	8 ♣	4 ♣
6th "	7 ♣	A ♣	5 ♡	2 ♡
7th "	Q ♣	5 ♣	7 ♡	7 ♢
8th "				Q ♡

And then, whether Z takes or not, A makes five-odd. Or again (same original lead):

	Y	B	Z	A
1st round	3 ♣	9 ♣	K ♣	2 ♣
2d "	6 ♣	10 ♣	8 ♣	4 ♣
3d "	5 ♢	A ♢	2 ♢	3 ♢
4th "	Q ♢	K ♢	4 ♢	6 ♢
5th "	7 ♣	A ♣	5 ♡	2 ♡
6th "	Q ♣	5 ♣	7 ♡	7 ♢
7th "	2 ♠	8 ♠	3 ♠	K ♠
8th "	6 ♡	3 ♡	A ♡	Q ♡

Z can not take another trick.

Then, if Y leads short and Z does not take

(fearing that Y has another heart, and that the suit will be established for A–B):

	Y	B	Z	A
1st round	9 ♡	J ♡	5 ♡	2 ♡
2d "	5 ♢	A ♢	2 ♢	3 ♢
3d "	Q ♢	K ♢	4 ♢	6 ♢
4th "	2 ♠	8 ♠	3 ♠	K ♠
5th "	3 ♣	9 ♣	K ♣	2 ♣
6th "	6 ♡	3 ♡	A ♡	4 ♡
7th "	4 ♠	K ♡	7 ♡	8 ♡
8th "	5 ♠	A ♠	J ♠	10 ♠
9th "	6 ♠	9 ♠	Q ♠	7 ♢
10th "	7 ♠	5 ♣	10 ♡	Q ♡
11th "	6 ♣	A ♣	8 ♣	4 ♣
12th "		J ♣		

On the sixth round, Z takes with the ace of hearts and returns a heart, in order to exhaust dummy's heart re-entry, should clubs become established. On the tenth round, A takes care to get rid of the master-heart, so that Z can't throw him the lead.

Once more, the same short lead from Y,

Z taking and returning the suit—in the hope that his ten may eventually be good:

	Y	B	Z	A
1st round	9 ♡	J ♡	A ♡	2 ♡
2d "	6 ♡	3 ♡	7 ♡	8 ♡
3d "	5 ♢	A ♢	2 ♢	3 ♢
4th "	Q ♢	K ♢	4 ♢	6 ♢
5th "	2 ♠	8 ♠	3 ♠	K ♠
6th "	3 ♣	9 ♣	K ♣	4 ♣
7th "	4 ♠	K ♡	5 ♡	4 ♡
8th "	5 ♠	A ♠	J ♠	10 ♠
9th "	6 ♠	9 ♠	Q ♠	7 ♢
10th "	7 ♠	5 ♣	10 ♡	Q ♡
11th "	6 ♣	10 ♣	8 ♣	2 ♣
12th "		A ♣		

I think you'll find this hand almost as good a test as the preceding one, for your card-shark friends.

CHAPTER V

SOME QUESTIONS

CAN you, my readers, answer quickly and correctly the following simple questions:

What happens when a lead is erroneously made before the bidding is closed?

What happens when a player bids out of turn?

When he doubles out of turn?

When he passes out of turn?

At the close of a hand, when one player is found to be short one card while all the rest have the proper number, what do you do?

What, if the short player happens to be dummy?

What, if one player has one card too few, and another player one card too many?

May a previous bid be asked during the declaration?

Must it be the immediately previous bid, or can *any* previous bid be demanded?

After the bidding is closed, may a previous bid be asked?

If not, what is your revenge if an adversary should do so?

If before, or during, the declaration, a player give any information regarding his hand—other than a legitimate declaration—what may you, as adversary, do?

If the declarant concedes a trick, or tricks, and it becomes subsequently apparent that he could win them, what happens?

What, if an opponent of the declaration does the same thing?

What, if a trick that has been turned and quitted is examined?

What, if anyone other than dummy, inadvertently plays two or more cards to one trick?

If the fourth player play ahead of the second?

If an adversary of the declarant lead out of turn, what is the penalty?

What, if the score be asked during the progress of the bidding?

Are you very sure on the subject of dummy's seven rights, and four additional possible rights?

May partners consult regarding penalties to be exacted? And if not, what is the correct form of exacting a penalty?

May a bid once made, be altered, and if so, under what circumstances?

May a double once made, be altered?

What of a pass?

Is there a penalty for the exposure of a card, or cards, by the declarant?

By an adversary? And if so, what?

When may a player be required to play his highest, or lowest, card to a trick?

When may he be required to win a trick, or to lose it?

When should a revoke be claimed?

If, after a hand is in progress, it is dis-

covered that it is being played by the wrong partner, what happens?

To all these questions and many similar ones you should have an immediate answer, if you are a player with any pretensions to knowledge. And yet, it is precisely on such heads that information is constantly demanded by really good players. It is astounding how much ignorance of the Laws, and indifference to them, one meets.

Remember the difference between rules and Laws. Rules may be broken, Laws never. They form the highest court of appeal; they are set and fixed by a special committee, form the universal decision for mooted questions, and are an immutable part of the game. If you don't follow the Laws, you don't get fifty a trick for defeating the bid, you don't get two-hundred-and-fifty for winning the rubber, you don't get a bonus for winning a doubled bid. You don't get anything that you invariably get, expect, and have a right to demand. *Who are you*,

to decide that you will regard certain of the Laws, and disregard others? You didn't make the game of Auction. How do you dare take such liberties with it?

I know a man who plays a beautiful game, plays invariably for money, always wants to raise the stakes, yet constantly refuses to regard those of the Laws of which he is, and permits himself to remain, ignorant. "We don't play that way," he always says; and to save unpleasantness, his associates humor him. But let him try a game amongst strangers, and see how he will fare!

Suppose you were fond of tennis. Suppose you were to meet on the courts a man whose game you had heard warmly praised. Suppose he played well—even brilliantly—but that whenever he missed a ball he would tell you that he "didn't count that." At your demur, he might admit that he "counted some mistakes, but not others." What would you think of his tennis?

Yet that is precisely what is done by the

Auction player who disregards the Laws. He counts some mistakes, but not others. He counts all those which result from errors of play, and disregards all which result from errors of form; yet the latter class of error is as serious as the former, as much a part of the game, as fully covered by law.

Be a sport. Play the game—not just a part of it. Penalize yourself, and you will soon cease to feel edgy under penalties. If you drop a card on the table, never *dream* of picking it up and restoring it to your hand (unless, indeed, you are the declarant and have no partner to be advantaged by seeing your card); lay it by your side subject to call, as a matter of course. When your partner makes an original lead out of turn, expect to have a suit called from your hand. When he bids out of turn, realize that your bid is barred for that hand. And let your adversaries know that they may expect no more maudlin mercy at your hands than you ask at theirs.

I'm not going to tell you the answers to all the questions I have just asked—it would be a waste of time and space. Some of you might know some of them, others might know others; so there is no need for me to go over them all—especially as you will find all the answers, carefully and concisely worded, in the Laws printed at the end of this volume.[1] A copy of the Laws should be in every house—or every trunk—in easy reach of Auction players; discussions arising, they are the sole arbiters.

Just to show you how surprisingly necessary is this precaution of always having a copy of the Laws handy, I will tell you something that happened to me not very long ago. It was in one of the card-rooms of the Breakers Hotel at Palm Beach. I was playing with three men—one of whom was the chairman of the Card Committee of one of the biggest and best-known Clubs in America. The two others were players of distinction and note. At a table not far from us, another game was in progress.

[1] At the time this book is published a revision of the Laws is in progress.

Suddenly, someone at this second table said, "Miss Irwin, are you dummy?" "No," I answered, "I'm playing the hand." So they sat and waited until it was obvious that our hand was over. Then they asked, "What is the penalty for leading before the bidding is closed?"

Just as I opened my mouth to answer, my companion, who was the chairman of a Card Committee, said, "New deal." "Oh, *no!*" I cried. "Yes, certainly," he answered. So I let the matter drop until the next day, when I showed him (and the others) the printed Law.

As a matter of fact, there is almost no error that calls for a new deal—and yet a new deal is regarded by most players as the universal panacea for all evils. In the case just quoted, there are three penalties, all exacted for the same error—the only case of a triple penalty that the Laws afford. First, the partner of the offending player is debarred from all further bidding during the hand;

second, if he becomes the eventual leader, he is forbidden to lead the suit of the card exposed; and third, that card is treated as an exposed card, and is subject to the call of the declarant.

You can easily see how confused it would all be if no account were taken of this law. We'll suppose a player to lead a card before the bidding is finished,—say, the ace of spades. His partner sees that card, and with the best will in the world he can't forget it. If he has a tinge of dishonesty in his make-up he will bid spades on five or six to a jack. If he is morbidly conscientious, he won't bid spades even though penalties are not being exacted, and he holds six to the king-queen. And even if he forfeits his bidding and leads the king of spades from king-queen (possibly the only lead in his hand), his adversaries will immediately suspect him of having been unduly influenced. The Law settles everything properly and there is no scope for dishonesty, no question of self-

flagellation, no suspicion, no undue advantage.

Whether you play well or badly, if you care one iota for the game (and otherwise, why play?), I beg of you to make yourself the constant champion of the Laws.

CHAPTER VI

HALF-RULES

HALF-RULES, like partial quotations, can be very misleading. Before you follow a rule, *be sure that you know all of it.* Three Auction rules, in excess of all others, have I heard almost universally mangled by curtailment. They are these:

Never finesse against your partner.

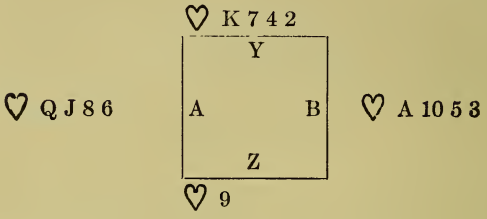
Always lead through strength.

Cover an honor with an honor.

Those sentences, cut loose from their proper context, can lead a player very far astray. Let me teach them to you in their proper form.

1st. Never finesse against your partner's original no-trump lead, UNLESS THERE IS A GUARDED HONOR IN DUMMY, IN WHICH CASE

YOU ARE AT LIBERTY TO FINESSE VERY DEEPLY IN THE SUIT. Here is an example:



Z is playing no-trumps, his only very weak suit being hearts. A leads his fourth-best heart, and dummy goes down with a thrice-guarded king. It would be utterly senseless for B to play the ace (provided dummy does *not* put up the king) and return the suit. That would be to make Z a present of a trick. Such tricks often spell game, they often spell rubber, they often make safe otherwise impossible contracts.

If dummy plays low to A's lead, B should certainly play the ten—even though the Rule of Eleven tells him that B has but one heart higher than a six, and it might be a lone

queen or lone jack. In case it were, B's play of the ten would make it good. But on the other hand, dummy's king would then never take; and should B play the ace to the first round that king would be triumphantly established. It is as broad as it is long if Z holds the queen or jack; *and in case he holds neither, and his card that outranks the six happens to be the nine, it's a great deal broader than it is long.* It is perfectly even chance whether Z holds the nine, the jack, or the queen. Has he one of the honors, B loses nothing by his finesse of the ten; while if Z holds the nine, the ten is a tremendously profitable play for B—it will keep Z from winning a single heart round. In other words, B can lose nothing, and may gain much, by the finesse. He should play the ten (which will win the trick) *and he should carefully refrain from returning the suit.* It is evident that A's hearts are neither long enough, nor strong enough, to cause much excitement or to necessitate their immediate

establishment. Therefore, let B—having won the first trick—lead his own suit, or lead up to weakness. When the hearts are led by any hand other than B's they are killed for Z.

2d. Lead through strength, BUT NOT THROUGH A SEQUENCE. There is an object in leading through ace-queen—your partner may hold the king; there is an object in leading through an ace and several small—your partner may have the king, or queen, or jack, THERE IS POSITIVELY NO OBJECT IN LEADING THROUGH ACE-KING, OR ACE-KING-QUEEN, for your trick will be taken and the suit still established against you. There are two purposes in Bridge—to take tricks and to command suits (so as to take later tricks). When a lead promises the fulfillment of neither object, avoid it. When there are *holes* in a suit, you lead through it—your partner may fill those holes. But when it is chock-a-block, what end would it serve to lead through it?

On the other hand, though it is always advisable to lead "up to weakness," it is not always possible. WHEN FORCED TO LEAD UP TO STRENGTH, CHOOSE ALWAYS SEQUENCE-STRENGTH RATHER THAN BROKEN STRENGTH. It is better to lead up to ace-king than ace-queen (your adversary would love to have you lead up to his ace-queen; he'd know just how cheaply to win the trick; you'd make both his high cards good). But it is better to lead *through* ace-queen; the reason is obvious.

3d. Cover an honor with an honor, WHEN YOU DON'T SEE THE TEN ON THE BOARD, OR DO SEE IT IN YOUR OWN HAND. The object of covering an honor with an honor is to establish the nine or the ten for your partner or yourself (the nine, by-the-way, is next in importance to the ten in indicating whether or not to cover an honor with an honor). When it is perfectly apparent that in covering an honor with an honor, you are merely establishing a nine or a ten for

the declarant, surely it is senseless to do it. Very often, indeed, when your adversary leads out an honor, it is in the hope of tempting you to cover it and let him kill it. He is merely following the rule, "When you want high cards to fall, lead high cards." He wants high cards to fall, so leads his high card to tempt yours. What he wants, surely you don't want. When I remember how relieved I often am to have my honors covered with adverse honors, I know it can not invariably be a good thing for my enemy so to oblige me.

Therefore, don't *always* cover an honor with an honor; but equally, don't say that I advised you *never* to do it. *Generally*, it is the right thing to do—but *sometimes* it isn't. That is the point that I am trying to impress. An expert knows infallibly when to do it and when not to do it. The *context* of the hand (if I may be pardoned so awkward an expression) shows him. The situation is made plain in a dozen ways. But to the less

practiced player I can give no rule better than this:

Cover an honor with an honor if you *don't* see the ten (or the nine) on the board, or *do* see it in your own hand!

CHAPTER VII

THE RUFF

RUFFS may be divided into three classes—the weak-hand ruff, the strong-hand ruff, and the cross-ruff.

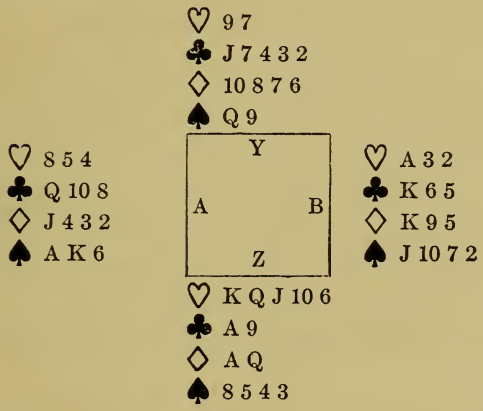
The weak-hand ruff is the ruff in dummy. A ruff in dummy must be taken early in the game, *and it is the only single-ruff that should.* In those rare cases where dummy holds five or six trumps, even the weak-hand ruff may be deferred until the adverse trumps are exhausted. But generally speaking, a ruff in dummy must be taken early, if at all. It is perfectly apparent that if trumps are first pulled, dummy's trumps will be exhausted—along with the adverse trumps—and he will never get his ruff. Take this hand:

The declarant is playing hearts and Y is dummy. Dummy has raised hearts twice on his ace of diamonds (either a trick or a raiser), his king of spades (either a trick or a raiser), and his singleton club (a raiser, only). The first lead is the ace of clubs, which takes. A will immediately drop clubs, and either lead a trump right up to strength (to kill one of the weak-hand ruffs) or else lead through strength on the board—hoping to put his partner in and give him a chance to lead trumps to weakness. We'll imagine

him to lead diamonds through the ace and four small. Let us suppose that his partner holds a guarded queen, while the declarant holds king-jack. The declarant wins the diamond trick in his own hand and leads a losing club for dummy to ruff. If he has three losing clubs, he tries to let dummy ruff all of them. Imagine the profit of making those three small trumps separately, instead of having them fall on his own big ones.

There is nothing more delightful for the declarant than a ruff in the weak hand—he should always try to take advantage of it early. But conversely, there is nothing more maddening for the adversaries than to witness such a ruff; they should always try to kill one early—even at the price of leading trumps up to strength. The motto for the declarant is, "Get a weak-hand ruff whenever it is possible." The motto for the adversaries is, "Never give the weak hand a ruff, nor the strong hand a discard." I can not possibly

furnish a better example of the advantage of a weak-hand ruff than by reprinting a hand which I have already published. It is one of the most startling examples that has ever come under my notice:



Z was a pre-emptive bidder, and opened the hand with "Two hearts"—capturing the bid at two, just as he would have captured it at one. And if A had played correctly, Z could no more have made his two hearts than he could have flown. Indeed,

unless he had played with great brilliancy, he couldn't even have made one. As it was, he made three. On the same hand, Z makes variously, one, two, or three hearts—according to A's play on the second round, and his own. The contract is lost or won, defeated or made safe, on that second round.

A led correctly, the king of spades. Then, seeing dummy's queen lying alone, he said, "Well, I think we'll just pick up that lady," and led another spade—actually *preparing* a weak-hand ruff for Z, actually making him a present of it. The moment this second lead was made, Z was safe for three-odd; both of those little trumps in dummy being marked as winners.

After taking the second spade, A led either a club or a diamond—we'll suppose the club, as that is a little less convenient for Z. Z took, and led a spade for dummy to trump. Then he led a diamond and finessed. The finesse working, he led another spade for dummy to ruff. His losses on the hand were

two spade-rounds, a club, and the ace of trumps.

Now, suppose after seeing dummy's possible spade-ruff, A had determined to kill it. (He needn't have feared a discard of the queen of spades, for on what could it have been discarded? Dummy has always to follow to every suit.) Suppose A had led a trump, right up to declared strength. Suppose B had taken and led another trump—to exhaust dummy. This second lead would have thrown Z into his own hand—and he could never get out of it. His losses would be: four spades, a trump, a club, and the queen of diamonds. He would have taken the book only.

His chance at one-odd lay in the second round. On the first trump-lead (won by B's ace) Z should have thrown his ten—in place of the six. Then on the second trump-lead, he would win with dummy's nine and would have a chance to finesse the diamonds; it would give him an extra trick.

As declarant then, remember always to get a weak-hand ruff whenever you can—and get it early, or dummy's trumps will be gone. And as adversary, never give the weak hand a ruff that can be avoided.

It will often pay the declarant to take a ruff in dummy while he still holds up the commanding card of the suit; as here:

Z is playing hearts, and A's first lead is the ace of clubs. As soon as he sees dummy, he should lead a heart. But we'll suppose him

to lead a diamond through strength, hoping to put his partner in, and avoiding a spade-lead because of the make-up of his spade-suit.

Z takes the diamond in his own hand, and sees himself with two losing clubs. *I would have him hold up the king, trumping a small one in dummy.* Then back to his own hand with a diamond or a spade, and another small club for dummy to trump. He should then exhaust trumps and make a perfectly easy small slam. In many hands this principle of holding up the master card of a suit while you trump its losing rounds in dummy makes all the difference in the world.

Now, while a ruff in the weak hand should almost always be taken early, a ruff in the strong hand should almost never be taken early—unless forced by the adversaries. That's the adversaries' game (forcing the strong hand), most certainly not the declarant's. To force his own strong hand, the one with which he means to exhaust trumps,

is like bleeding himself in two places at once. Time enough for him to take strong-hand ruffs when the adverse trumps are exhausted, when his own good trumps have accomplished their legitimate purpose of killing those of the enemy, when he—being longer in trumps than anyone else, can still take ruffs with his little left-over trumps, everyone else being trump-less and exhausted. *That* is the time when a strong-hand ruff comes in triumphantly.

And yet, I am constantly forced to watch declarants busy themselves with this petty business of exhausting their own strong hands with ruffs, the while the adversaries sit smiling at the prospect of holding the long-trump, after all. They *love* to see the declarant chasing about on these side-issues instead of pulling out their trumps. It is the very thing that they would try to make him do if they had the chance—and here is he, doing it himself. No wonder they smile!

Here is a case in point:

Z was playing two spades. He should have made five-odd—losing two tricks and winning five over his book; the way he played it, he lost five and made but two over his book.

A led the king of clubs. Dummy took, and so anxious was Z to take club-ruffs in his strong trump-hand, that he began at once to do the thing that he should have left to the adversaries—forcing his strong hand with ruffs. He led a small club and ruffed; led a diamond to dummy's queen, then another club and ruffed it. Then he led a heart. A,

realizing that the king of hearts must take, and being perfectly willing to see Z bleed himself to exhaustion, played the jack and let dummy's king win; then Z led dummy's last club, ruffing it with his jack. He had now but two trumps left, and could not afford to lead them. (He was feeling rather cocky, however, as he had not lost a round.) He threw the lead by playing his last heart. A took with the queen and led the ace, which Z was forced to trump with his queen. He next led a diamond, which A trumped. A led a heart, dummy trumped with the five, B with the king, and Z with the ace. And he never took another trick.

Now see what he might have done! On the first lead he plays dummy's ace of clubs. Then he leads the five of spades and finesses his own jack. Back into dummy with a diamond, and another trump-lead—on which he kills B's king with his own ace. Then the queen of trumps. Next, realizing that the leading trump *alone* is against him, he

determines to make A ruff with it. He leads a diamond. To save a slam (as he thinks) A trumps the diamond and leads the queen of clubs—which Z trumps. He loses two rounds; the second diamond and the heart ace. He makes five-odd in place of two-odd, thanks to the fact that he was not in a hurry to take a ruff in his strong hand.

These, then, are the rules for single ruffs: generally speaking, take your weak-hand ruff early—otherwise you won't get it at all. But never force your own strong hand by early ruffs; you will merely exhaust yourself and leave the ranks of the adverse trumps unbroken. We have next to consider the cross-ruff.

Very few things are as profitable as cross-ruffs; they are bonanzas to the side which profits by them, maddening to its adversaries. To see an opponent make all his trumps separately—taking two tricks in place of one with each pair of trumps—is a heart-scald. To see a pair of opponents do likewise (for cross-ruffs are sometimes established against

the make) is as bad. *The adversaries of a cross-ruff should always come in at the first opportunity, at no matter what cost, and lead trumps.* Let me illustrate:

The score is 27-all on the rubber-game. Z is playing three spades. B has bid three diamonds, in which he could be defeated by one trick—though his honors would cover his losses. But Z, with a singleton diamond, doesn't know that B's bid is doomed to failure, and in the fear of losing rubber he has gone to three spades. A raise from his part-

ner has encouraged him to this—though with eight losers in his hand it is rather an optimistic bid. However, Z hopes to lose less than the rubber.

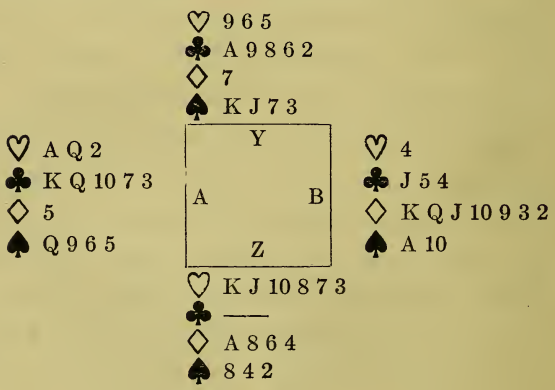
If he draws trumps he can make but the odd. Playing the hand at a cross-ruff—trumping clubs in dummy and diamonds in his own hand—he can make three-odd; just see the difference between making his own trumps separately from dummy's, and having them fall together!

The only way to frustrate Z's three-odd, is for B to over-ruff the third club-lead—using his ace to this end—and to lead trumps. How many players would so "waste" the ace of trumps? Let us follow the hand:

A leads the king of clubs (if he should choose the nine of diamonds, to his partner's bid, the result would be the same); Z takes the club with his own ace, and leads the deuce, dummy trumping. From dummy, Z leads the ace of diamonds, and then a small one, which he trumps. A club, with a ruff

in dummy. Another diamond, with a ruff in his own hand. Then another club, and it is on this round that B should over-ruff dummy's little spade with his own ace—immediately leading another trump. In this way, instead of seeing Z sail into victory with 27 points, 18 honors, and 250 for rubber, he defeats him by 50 points less his 18 honors. Quite a different result!

Here is another hand pointing the same moral. It is not quite as striking, because Z (who played the original hand at hearts) should not have won the bid at all:



The score on this hand is not given; but at any score I cannot imagine A-B letting Z get away with a four-heart bid. A can make four no-trumps—but he would naturally shun it, even after a diamond-bid from his partner; A holds a singleton in B's suit, his own best suit lacks its ace, and he knows nothing whatever of the spades. He would, I grant, hesitate to go very high in no-trumps, and he can never once raise diamonds. But why B, with seven diamonds to eight honors, a singleton, an ace-doubleton, *and* a no-trump partner, should not bid five diamonds, I fail to see. True, B has six losers and a partner who never raises him. But that partner's no-trump bid (being made after the heart-bid) shows that he has at least a stopper in hearts and three other tricks. Were I B, I should certainly never let Z play four hearts.

However, our present interest is not in the bid, but in the play. If A-B leave Z to an uninterrupted cross-ruff (in which he trumps

diamonds in dummy and clubs in his own hand) he will make his four-odd easily. But if A (in spite of his major ten-ace in trumps and his position of vantage) leads trumps against Z, the latter will be defeated by one trick. On the second diamond lead (Z plays the ace and then leads a small one) A should trump with the queen, lead the ace, and follow it with the deuce. He thus kills the ruff and the bid.

Remember then, *when the declarant doesn't lead trumps, you should lead them against him.*

Remember that one dishonest hand generally makes another dishonest hand—sometimes two or three others. By this, I mean that if you have a singleton or a blank suit, don't forget that the uneven distribution in your hand is almost sure to make a like uneven distribution somewhere else; make your calculations accordingly.

Remember that as declarant or as opponent, you should dread an adverse cross-ruff as you would dread the plague. When one is

in progress and it is possible for you to get it, *come in at any cost and lead trumps.*

Remember that as declarant, you should almost always take a *single* ruff early, if it is in dummy; and that you should almost never take it early if it is in your own hand. You'll have trumps when everyone's else are gone.

Remember that nothing is more profitable for the declarant than a ruff in the weak hand and a discard in the strong one. As declarant, always try to get them; as adversary, always try to kill them. Let the declarant take as many single ruffs in his own hand as he likes—he is exhausting himself and not hurting you; his trumps *have* to make; be thankful that he is wasting them on side-suit instead of pulling your own trumps. Also, as adversary, remember that the discard of a loser in dummy doesn't generally hurt you much or help the declarant much, unless, indeed, it prepares a weak-hand ruff. In a weak hand there are (generally speaking) so many losers that one or two more or less

will make small difference. But in the strong hand, every loser that the declarant discards will immensely strengthen his prospects.

And never fail to remember that two pairs of players working against each other, can not *possibly* be advantaged by the same thing. What one of them wants, the other doesn't want. Therefore, if the declarant doesn't want trumps led, the adversaries do. If he tries to get discards of a certain suit, they should lead that suit straight to him. If he dodges the usual method of pulling trumps and tries to make dummy's separately from his own, they should never let him do it; they should get in at any price and pull his trumps.

WHAT YOUR ADVERSARY WANTS IS NEVER WHAT YOU WANT. WHEN YOU SEE HIM WORKING FOR A THING, DON'T GIVE IT TO HIM. WHEN YOU SEE HIM DODGING A THING, FLING IT AT HIM. THWART HIM WHENEVER IT IS POSSIBLE. OTHERWISE, YOU ARE PLAYING HIS GAME AND NOT YOUR OWN.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REAL DOUBLE

In my book, *The Complete Auction Player*, I have instructed so specifically on the subject of the double and the redouble that there is little additional to be said. A few startling hands that I have played, or seen played, during the last few months will merely serve to emphasize the doubling principles that I have always held and taught; they will also, I think, prove interesting. But before giving them, I will recapitulate briefly the fundamental principles governing all honest, safe, and profitable doubles. You may not own my former book, or you may not have it by you.

I hope I am a modest woman, and I think I am. Nevertheless, putting aside all ques-

tion of personal praise and speaking merely in the interest of Auction, I am going to make a few startling statements:

I have never seen anyone lose as few doubles as I lose! In fact, I never lose one at all. And that is not to say that I never double, for I do; *but when I do, I always make my double.* And the reason of that is, that the doubling principles I have evolved are safe ones. My pupils, who follow them, never lose *their* doubles. Nor will you, if you will adopt them. If you like to lose doubles, or are willing to do it just for the fun and excitement of making them, this chapter won't interest you in the least.

It is very different to say that you never lose a double, and to say that you never lose a bid. Of course you lose bids. Everyone does. Everyone must. You often make bids *knowing* that you must lose them, but preferring to save a situation and to take a small loss rather than a great one. But you never so make doubles. To make a double

that you knew you were going to lose would be to label yourself a fool.

This cuts the situation down to those bids, or those doubles, which are made in the full expectation of winning, but which really lose. There are such bids; there must be. But the player who makes the fewest of them is the player with the longest vision, or the clearest. And when it comes to such doubles, take my word for it there should be very few of them. The reason is clear: you cannot *play* a hand without bidding, *but you can perfectly well defeat it without doubling.* In other words, to refrain from bidding is to forfeit definitely all chance of doing that which you hope to be able to do; to refrain from doubling is not. There's all the difference in the world, of course. And accordingly, there's far more excuse for losing a bid than a double. Frequently to lose doubles is to prove one of three things:

1st. That you are not astute enough to foresee.

2d. That in doubtful hands you are too grasping. Not content with possible fifties, you reach for possible hundreds—and in over-reaching, you're content to bestow possible bonuses and doubled trick-values on your adversaries. It's the case of the dog and the bone and the shadow. *I keep my mouth shut on that bone.*

3d. That in unusual hands you're willing to take long chances.

In answer to the inevitable (and possibly fair) charge that I am over-cautious about doubles, let me ask you to take two suppositious cases—that of a man who doubles over-frequently, making many hands and losing many more—and that of a man who doubles only on safety, *who never loses*, and who scores a hundred per cent on all safe hands and fifty per cent on all doubtful ones. Do you think the former will come out any richer in the long run than the latter? I *know* he won't.

I am perfectly appalled at the frequency

with which I see doubles fail in the hands of practiced players. I should feel disgraced, did I so lose them. And as it is my system, and not myself, that I am extolling, and as I am anxious to make you its sharer and its beneficiary, perhaps you'll let me.

Here follow my basic principles:

Never double the only bid you can defeat.

Never double on one suit alone.

Double on a general hand, rather than a long line of trumps.

As you count your losers to bid, you must count your takers to double.

Double with the sure book in your hand—trusting your partner for the odd; unless, indeed, your double would give the adversary a safe chance of escape. Also, unless bidding would pay you better than defeating.

Never double anything unless you can double everything. (Don't faint; that is merely another way of advising you not to let your quarry escape by some path that you can't cover; merely asking you to cut out the

undesirable doubles and leave the desirable ones.)

As partner of a doubler, *don't interfere*, unless:

You have a bid that means a sure rubber (advisable).

You have high honors in a major-suit, and a safe bid (negligible).

You have given false information by some former bid or double on the hand (necessary).

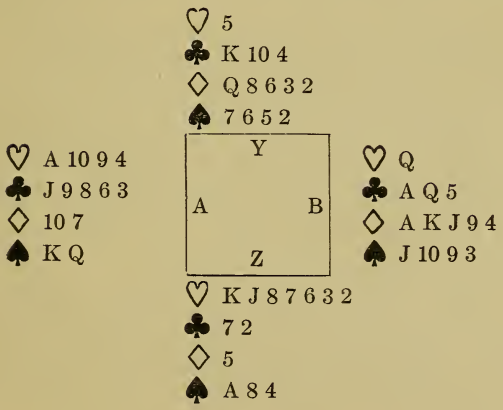
You can by no possibility take the one trick on which your partner may be counting (possible).

If you follow these precepts, it won't be long before you earn the reputation of being a sound doubler—of never, or rarely, losing a double. Between what you *earn* with your good doubles, what you *save* by refraining from bad ones, and what you take by being content with fifty per cent on doubtful ones (halving possible profits, totally wiping out losses, and discounting disaster to the vanishing point), I'm willing to wager that *on the*

same cards, you'll be richer at the end of the year than by any other possible method.

If you know any players who *like* unsafe doublers for partners, or who *dislike* them for adversaries, your experience is wider than mine.

And now for a few hands:



It was a clean score, and I was B.

Z opened with "A heart"; A and Y passed, and I said "Two diamonds." Z, "Two hearts," A "Three diamonds," and Y doubled.

Where was the sure book in his hand—his four sure tricks?

Where was his "general hand" on which doubling is safer than on a long line of trumps?

What about his position, under the bid?

Why was he so sure that his heart singleton would fall on an ace held by his partner? Every bidder doesn't hold the ace of his suit.

If Y was counting on innumerable heart-ruffs, *who did he think was going to lead him all those hearts?* Certainly not I, and he couldn't expect his partner to be leading *all* the time.

If he takes more than two ruffs, what becomes of his queen of trumps?

Is that king of clubs a very sure trick?

Do I make you see it, dear readers, as it looks to me? Do I clarify this doubling vision for you? To me, it is as plain as the nose on my face; but the necessary thing is to impart my certitude to others.

I feel no hesitancy in saying that *at some point short of five-odd* most players would

have doubled those diamonds. And yet, five-odd was exactly what I made—what anyone could have made.

Did I redouble? Indeed, *not!* In the first place, I didn't want Z to go back to hearts; I *liked* diamonds at 14 a trick. In the second place, I hadn't seen A's hand.

We'll follow the play, because it was interesting:

Z led the ace of spades, which I think was his best choice, despite the fact that it helped me tremendously. Upon seeing dummy, he switched to the seven of clubs. Dummy played eight, Y ten, and I queen. I led my nine of spades, taking in dummy. Then dummy's ten of trumps, which took. I followed with the seven, overtaking with my own nine. Then the queen of hearts, which Z covered and dummy won. Dummy led the nine of clubs, which Y passed. Then came the six of clubs, which drew Y's king and allowed me to kill it. I led the ace and king of trumps, and followed them with a

spade. Of course, I made five-odd; I couldn't have helped it *from the moment that the double placed the trump-strength.* Had Y covered the nine of clubs, I should have made a small slam.

Here is another double, and a much harder hand to play. Also, one which teaches many lessons other than good doubling:

The score was 27-all on the rubber-game, and it had been a hard fight.

Z bid "a no-trump," A passed, Y over-called with "Two diamonds," and B said

"Three clubs." Z raised the diamonds to three, A said "Four clubs," Y and B passed, and Z said "Four diamonds." Anxious to save rubber, B bid "Five clubs," with no expectation of making them. I think Z had a perfect right to double this bid; the score showed him that it was forced, he had certainly the book in his hand (the king of spades and the ace of hearts). *The even distribution of his own cards killed his fear of adverse ruffs.* He therefore had a right to hope for a diamond trick, either in his own hand or his partner's. In spite of all this, Y's call-off may have meant an absolutely desperate hand (as, in fact, it did) and Z lacked the ace of the suit he had been bidding. I might not have made that double, but I couldn't criticize it.

B, who could have made five clubs doubled and taken a triumphant rubber, allowed himself to be defeated by one trick—all because of a bugaboo. The moment he saw dummy he became obsessed by the certainty that Z

held the ace-queen of hearts, and that his own king was under a fourchette. His sole idea was to make Z lead hearts to him. Had he permitted himself the hope that *either* the ace *or* the queen of hearts lay in Y's hand, and had he played accordingly, he would have made his bid. And this brings me to the first lesson I want to point: in difficult hands, imagine that things are as you want them to be—that the adverse cards are distributed to your possible advantage, and not all of them to your undoing, AND PLAN YOUR HAND WITH THAT IDEA. It is astonishing how often one, at least, of the strong adverse cards is where you want it to be; it is astonishing what a nerve-soother the mental attitude will prove. Long ago, when I was a mere Bridge infant, a veteran player gave me this bit of advice; it took me a long while to believe in it—I am naturally averse to trusting anything to luck. But at last I have made this precept a part of my Auction armor, and I never saw a hand which em-

phasized its advantage better than the one under discussion.

Remember throughout, that *B feels sure that Z holds the major ten-ace in hearts.*

Z led the king of spades, proving how much better is a lead from two high touching honors than an ace-lead. Had he led the ace of hearts (a perfectly correct lead) B's troubles would have been over. The king of spades was also a better lead than the ten of diamonds (from three honors); though there was no indication in Z's own hand of an adverse diamond-ruff, the fact remained that he lacked the ace of his own suit, and that Y's over-call did not necessarily announce it; moreover, the over-call must have been made on at least five cards, possibly on more. Someone *might* have been short. The king of spades must take, or the queen must be established. This choice of lead furnishes the second lesson in the hand.

The third is furnished by the good sense that told B *not* to use the Bath Coup: "Hold-

ing ace-knave and another, or others, and playing fourth to the trick, hold up both ace and knave *if* the king or queen be on the trick and if the next lead will come up to you." B held the ace-knave and another of spades, the king was on the trick, he played fourth to it, and the next lead would come up to him—yet he wisely dispensed with the use of the Bath Coup, which in this case would be a losing play. This shows that the Coup is *not* a necessary play; it is merely an optional one, so well known as to have earned a title.

And now I will give you the play of the hand, up to the seventh trick—where it was lost.

	Z	A	Y	B
1st round	K ♠	3 ♠	4 ♠	A ♠
2d "	Q ♣	K ♣	2 ♢	J ♣
3d "	3 ♣	2 ♣	3 ♢	7 ♣
4th "	6 ♣	4 ♣	5 ♢	8 ♣

As Z, I should never have covered that first club-lead; I should have taken the

chance of making B pull two trumps for one, and of letting him do it as long as he wanted to. With four clubs on the board, three in Z's hand, and B bidding clubs to five, there was no hope that Z might establish a ten in his partner's hand, and consequently no excuse for him to "cover an honor with an honor."

After winning the fourth round, it is obvious to us that the play of the queen of diamonds through Z's king would be highly advantageous. But B didn't know what we know; he didn't know the position of the king of diamonds. Y was the first to bid diamonds, while Z had merely raised them. Y might have bid on five to the king, and Z have raised on four to the jack-ten. In that case, to play the queen and let it go through would be to lose an unnecessary diamond round; add that to the ace and queen of hearts, and the hand was beaten. B's mental picture of the hand on which Z had bid his no-trump was probably something like this:

♡ A Q 8
♣ Q 6 3
◇ J 10 7 5
♠ K Q 6

The one thing he felt sure of was that Z held the ace-queen of hearts. If B led hearts, he thought he must lose the first two rounds —even though he established the jack. He would also lose the queen of spades—and that would be one trick too many. Remember, he had made his bid in the full expectation of being defeated, but the moment he saw dummy—those spades, that ace of diamonds, those four clubs to the king—he knew he could make five-odd if he could get the hearts led to him.

After winning the fourth round with the eight of clubs, he led the jack of spades—to establish two rounds in dummy. Again, Z covered—he was evidently a coverer. He led the king of diamonds, which dummy won. And now came B's mistake. There were the two master-spades established in dummy, and

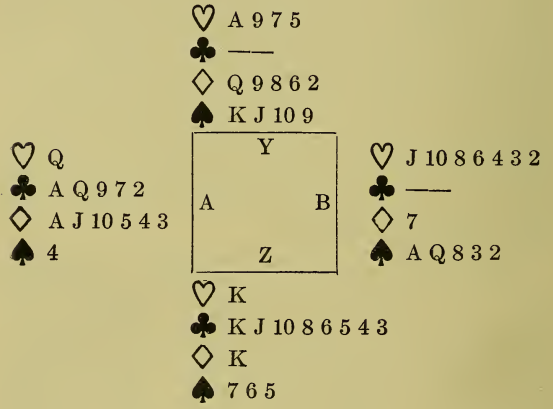
there in his own hand was the deuce with which to get to them. He should have led dummy's jack of hearts, right up to that ten-ace he feared; it would have established a third round; but to him, the play meant defeat. He led two rounds of spades to get discards—and hurt himself more than he hurt anyone else, for he had to discard a heart. Then he made his absolutely fatal error by leading a diamond and trumping it. Landing in his own hand with no means of escape, he had eventually to lead hearts from king-ten, and to lose both rounds—and the odd trick into the bargain.

Seen open, this hand is obvious. Closed, it was a very different matter. I know, for I have given it to many classes of advanced pupils; they all fear the hearts and the king of diamonds. But what really kills the hand is the complete conviction that the ace-queen of hearts lies over the king.

All other things being equal, no signs to the contrary being forthcoming, always imagine

things to be as you want them, rather than as you don't, and play accordingly.

A hand given on page 133 must here be repeated, because of the doubling lessons it carries. Bear in mind that it is not the bid, nor the play, that I want to discuss in this chapter; merely the double:



B was an excellent player. He had repeatedly told me that "if there was anything he hated, it was to have his partner take him out of a double when he wanted to stay

in." This being so, he might have allowed his partner a share in such sentiments.

Z opened with "Three clubs." A said "Three diamonds," Y passed, and B said "Three hearts." (You see how little Z's preëmptive opening bid preëmpted.) Z bid "Four clubs," A doubled, Y passed, and it came to B—the man who particularly hated to be taken out of a double. He looked at his hand, and decided that he didn't dare let it go; he bid "Four hearts"—thereby interfering tremendously with his partner's beautiful plans for a big score.

Had B opened the bid with hearts, there would have been excuse for his not letting the double stand—for in that case he would have given false information. But by the time the bid came to him, it had long since ceased to mean "Ace or king at the top."

Had B not held a single possible trick for A, again he might have over-called the double; but his ace of spades should certainly rank as a trick.

Then, B's own uneven hand pointed to other uneven hands. *Perhaps his partner would be as short in hearts or spades as was he, himself, in diamonds and clubs;* in that case, B would be wise not to bid four in either of his own suits, but to let the double stand.

If you hate to have your partner do a thing to you, remember that he will probably hate to have you do it to him!

At what point would you double spades on this hand (the bid having been made on your right)?

♡ K 10 6 5 4
♣ Q 4 3
◇ ——
♠ 10 6 5 3 2

It was the decisive hand in a tournament at Atlantic City. Z, a lucky, a showy, a rather brilliant, but a thoroughly unreliable player, opened with "One spade." A, sitting next with the hand just given (and having had wretched luck throughout the game)

made the rather weak bid of "Two hearts." Y followed with a spade raise. B said "Three hearts," Z "Three spades," and A doubled—this being the last chance of a score. Whether Z won at spades or defeated A-B at hearts, the tournament would be lost for A. If he could win at hearts or defeat Z at spades, the tournament would be won. Fearing the four-heart bid, he doubled the spades—to my thinking, with an extreme lack of wisdom.

A's book is four. *Where are the four tricks in his hand?* He should hold the book, trusting his partner for the odd. If anyone can find four tricks in that hand, I shall be very much surprised. If A uses his hand in ruffing, he will unguard his ten of trumps. *And anyhow, who is going to give him all those ruffs?*

As A holds a blank suit, he can be sure that some other player holds a blank, or at least a short, suit. A's hearts are doomed.

What reliance can be placed on a barely guarded side-queen?

Suppose one of the adversaries should go to four diamonds?

It was a miserable double; here is the entire hand:

B correctly passed the double, and it was thanks to his hand that A fared no worse than he did.

And, for a last example, at what point would you double hearts on this hand, and sitting on the right of the heart bidder?

♡ 10 7 4 3 2
♣ A K Q J 5 3
◇ 9
♠ K

Your two singletons are losers before they are assets; if you use your trumps for ruffing, you'll never make your ten—and as I've repeatedly said, who's going to give you all those ruffs? You can't lead to them yourself, the adversary won't be such a fool, and your partner won't be constantly in the lead.

With so dishonest a hand yourself, you may be sure that there is at least one other dishonest hand at the table; *someone's going to ruff your clubs.*

I should count that hand as taking two tricks—one club and one trump, or one club and one ruff; and I should certainly not double anything under five, at which bid I should hope to have the book in my hand. As a matter of fact, the clubs were ruffed on the first round, and a small slam was scored

against the double (which had been incredibly made at "*Three* hearts").

Here is the hand:

I played Z, and though I knew I could score my bid, I took care not to redouble. Hearts at sixteen a trick, a bonus, and some extra tricks to score above and below suited me down to the ground. Why should I want to frighten A back to the suit I lacked? Of course, if he went back to clubs, I could as easily go on in hearts; but suppose he didn't

double me again! Then my hearts would be worth only their normal value, I'd have no bonus and no extra tricks. And even if he did double, I'd have one extra trick the less to my credit. No, I was very well content to score 410 points on the hand, without grasping for more.

Remember the dog, the bone, and the shadow!

CHAPTER IX

EIGHTS AND NINES

THROUGHOUT this chapter it will be necessary for you to differentiate sharply between an eight or a nine *led*, and an eight or a nine *played on a trick already led*—whether in following or in discard.

Against any declared trump, the lead of an eight or a nine is *always* short (singleton or doubleton). It couldn't possibly be anything else. It couldn't be fourth-best from an honor, because if you put any three cards above an eight or a nine, two of them, at least, must be honors; and you don't lead fourth-best from two honors against a declared trump. If the two honors touch, you lead one of them. If they don't touch, you avoid the suit. And should all three of the

cards higher than the eight (or the nine) be honors, you would, of course, lead one of them. "Your lead against any three honors is ALWAYS one of those honors" (whether the hand be trumps or no-trumps).

Against no-trumps, on the other hand (where there are no designedly short leads), an eight is always a genuinely fourth-best lead, because against no-trumps you *do* lead fourth-best from two honors—whether they touch, or whether they don't. Not from *three* honors, mark you, but from two. Against a declared trump, you lead fourth-best from a single honor (if you have to), but never from two nor from three. Against no-trumps, you lead fourth-best from one honor, or from two honors, but never from three. A couple of examples may help:

♡ J 7 3
♣ K Q 9 8 5
◇ Q 10 4
♠ J 3

Your lead against hearts, diamonds, or spades is the king of clubs (from two honors that touch); your lead against no-trumps is the eight of clubs (the fourth-best card of your longest suit).

♡ J 7 3
♣ K J 9 8 5
◇ Q 10 4
♠ J 3

Against any declared trump, you must let the clubs alone on your opening lead, because your two honors do not touch. It is a hard hand to lead from: against spades, you would be forced to lead your third-best diamond; against diamonds or hearts, your choice would have to fall on the jack of spades (higher of two). Of course, in any of these cases already given, if your partner has bid you will lead your highest of his suit. Returning to the hand under discussion: against no-trumps, your lead is again the eight of hearts; even though you hold two honors that do not touch, you lead the fourth-best card of your longest suit.

Hence it follows that an eight-lead is always a singleton or a doubleton against a declared trump, but that it is a legitimate fourth-best lead against no-trump. A nine is likewise a singleton or a doubleton against declared trumps, *but against no-trumps it is a signal of distress.* It says, "Don't let this lead deceive you, Partner, and don't sacrifice anything in its behalf. Don't return it, unless for purposes of your own. I haven't any suit; or if I have, it must be led to me. Therefore I lead this nine as a signal of distress."

How can the nine say all this?

In the first place, it isn't a short lead, for why should anyone want to lead short against no-trumps when there is no chance of ruffing?

And in the second place, it couldn't be fourth-best, because if the nine were your fourth-best card the three higher would infallibly all be honors—and your lead from three honors is ALWAYS one of those honors, whether against trumps or no-trumps.

If you, as declarant, are playing any de-

clared trump and if the original lead against you is a nine or an eight, *wake up and pull trumps*. Don't do any finessing. Unless that nine or eight were led in response to a partner's bid, it is a singleton or a doubleton; its holder is asking for a ruff; don't be obliging enough to give it.

Here is a hand where negligence of this principle cost a lot. Z was a very self-satisfied player, and my partner in this particular rubber. The score was love-all on the rubber game:

Z opened with "A spade," A passed, I said "Two spades," and B very bravely went to "Three diamonds" to save rubber. Z said "Three spades," A "Four clubs," which I passed—feeling sure that a late-round club-bid on a clean score did not threaten much. B hesitated, but passed, feeling probably that her diamonds made a good side-suit, and Z said "Four spades," which closed the bidding.

A led the eight of hearts. Personally, I think the seven of diamonds to her partner's bid would have been a much better choice. She had the chance of a third-round ruff, and some hope of her partner taking the diamond-round, whereas the heart was a total uncertainty. In addition, the diamond-lead would have told her adversary nothing; the heart-lead (being an eight) shouted aloud that she wanted to ruff hearts.

Do you think that eight-spot warned Z? Not the least in the world. To my gasping amazement, she finessed my jack; B took and returned a heart which A ruffed; she led

the seven of diamonds which was won by B who naturally returned another heart. A-B took five tricks (defeating the bid by two) before my partner ever got in, and all because of a finesse on an eight-spot. She said later that she thought A was leading from the queen. It is obvious that A couldn't have been leading from the queen; and even if she could, Z could have played the king, and *still* have held that queen under dummy's fourchette, ready to be led through when trumps were gone.

Z, the all-sufficient, told us later that she "had never heard anyone say that an eight-spot was bound to be a short lead!"

These, then, are the messages conveyed by eight-spot and nine-spot leads: both of them are invariably short against declared trumps: the eight is a legitimate fourth-best against no-trumps, and the nine is a signal of distress.

I am often questioned about the standing of a short lead. It is excellent. There is no longer any stigma on a short lead, as there

used to be when it was called a "sneak" (almost as ugly a word as "renig"). Some players like short leads and others don't; personally, I love them. I have seen countless hands defeated by short leads that could never be defeated in any other way. Those who dislike them, argue that in the event of their going wrong the suit is established for the adversary and is a wonderful asset when trumps are gone. This is true; but in the case of their going right, they'll kill a hand when nothing else will. The most conservative players never lead short with fewer than four trumps; they argue that if the short lead goes against them, the declarant will lead trumps; but that, as he will hesitate to lead more than three rounds (for fear of weakening his own hand), they will still get their ruff with their fourth trump. While this is true, I think it is ultra-conservative, and deters from many excellent and profitable short leads. No one, of course, should invite a ruff unless he wants to take it—as in the

case of trumps that are strong enough to defeat the make, and which should never be wasted on ruffs.

We come now to eights and nines *played to the first round of a suit* (not led), whether in following, or in discard.

As a first discard, an eight or a nine always shows strength in the suit; it asks that that suit be led to the discarder; it is called an encouragement-discard (together with all cards higher than the six).

In following, on a suit led by the adversary, an eight or nine played to the first round is a sign of shortness, or of high cards being held. It should always receive immediate startled notice.

Played to a partner's original king-lead, it is almost sure to be a singleton, or the first card of an echo ("down and out"); to play high on the first round of a suit and low on the second, is to show that you can trump the third round. Echo only on your partner's leads; never give such valuable information

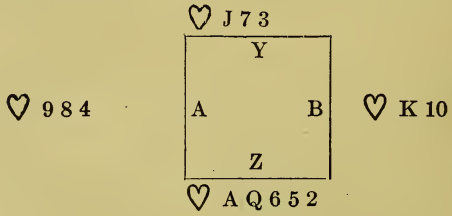
to the adversary; and of course, never echo when you can't trump.

Played on a partner's original ace-lead, an eight or a nine says, "I have the king; come on." Again, it is an encouragement-card. There are times when you hold the king to your partner's ace, and lack the card to tell him so; then it will all come out later. There are times when you do not hold the king to his ace and are yet forced to play encouragement; that cannot be avoided—it is the sporting chance of the game. But generally, you will find yourself in a position to give legitimate information *by play of card*—provided you have the skill to give it, and your partner has the skill to read it.

Remember, eights and nines may be played by the declarant in false-carding—purposely to mislead his adversaries. He is the only person at the table who can afford to false-card, because he is the only one who has no partner to be deceived. Don't take any of

his eight-and-nine information too seriously; don't let it frighten you off a suit.

Remember, the nine (almost equally with the ten) is the indication when to cover an honor with an honor, and when to finesse an honor toward an honor. I have already taught you to cover an honor with an honor *when you do not see the nine (or the ten) on the board, or do see it in your own hand.* And you should finesse an honor toward an honor when you hold (in either hand) the nine or the ten; whereas you should finesse a small card toward an honor when you do *not* hold (in either hand) the nine or the ten. As here:



You (as Z) must lead that suit from the jack-hand—*i.e.*, from the weak hand to the

strong. But to lead the jack toward the ace would be to lose the third round, *because you hold neither the nine nor the ten.* Holding either, or both, your first proper lead is the jack, toward the ace-queen.

CHAPTER X

CONDENSED LEADS

DISCUSSING leads one day, I said it was a shame that anyone should attempt to play without knowing them, *when all the leads there are could be condensed on a single side of an ordinary sheet of type-writer paper*—and that surely any player could learn as much as that. Being "stumped" to prove my assertion as to the little space they need occupy, I will give my readers the benefit of the result.

Against Any Declared Trump

LEAD ONE OF TWO TOUCHING HONORS; ONE OF ANY THREE HONORS; AN ACE; FOURTH-BEST FROM A SINGLE HONOR THAT IS NOT THE ACE; A SINGLETON, OR A DOUBLE-

TON (higher of two). *There are no other leads.*

The lead of an ace denies the king. Always lead ace from an ace-suit, unless you hold king as well. *Never* lead low from an ace-suit. To lead ace and follow it with king shows that you have no more of that suit and want to ruff it.

THE LEAD OF THE KING shows the ace, or the queen, or both.

THE LEAD OF A QUEEN denies all higher cards, and shows the jack.

THE LEAD OF A JACK denies all higher cards and shows the ten.

THE LEAD OF THE TEN shows the two gentlemen (some players lead the jack here).

The best lead is from two honors that touch.

Holding two honors that do not touch, let the suit come up to you.

HOLDING ANY THREE HONORS, YOUR LEAD IS ALWAYS ONE OF THOSE HONORS.

All other leads are either fourth-best from

a single honor *that is not the ace*, or else short.

A short lead is a singleton or a doubleton.

NEVER LEAD FOURTH-BEST FROM TWO HONORS, NOR FROM THREE. SIMPLY FROM A SINGLE HONOR THAT IS NOT THE ACE.

Against No-trumps

Your lead is ALWAYS the fourth-best card of your longest suit, UNLESS you have a seven-card suit, or a three-honor suit, in which case you lead high.

Holding no decent suit, lead a nine-spot as a signal of distress.

Holding no suit and no nine-spot, lead the *next-to-top* card of a long weak suit.

CHAPTER XI

HISTORY

DURING the war, Auction naturally receded into the background—which is not to say that it ceased to have its uses; in trenches, in nursing-homes, in hospitals, it proved a solace to hundreds of weary men. Nevertheless, it was merely a way of passing dull time—never a first interest.

In those years of inaction, the most ridiculous of all the many offshoots of Auction appeared under the name of Pirate Auction. So dead is Pirate now that it doesn't deserve even a funeral-sermon; so short was its life, it had far better never been born; so monstrous was its form, it seemed impossible that anyone could take it seriously. Nevertheless, there were those who spent money in

learning it, and those who made money by teaching it. They say there is always something for which to be thankful; I'm thankful that Pirate Auction never touched me. *Requiescat in pace.*

Two other silly additions were proposed to the game: first, that a player should be allowed to score only as much as he bid; and second, that each side should be permitted one intentional revoke. Needless to say, these didn't go very far.

From time to time the discussion over slams arises: there are those who insist that a slam should be awarded a bonus only when it is a declared slam; that is, if a player makes six tricks, or seven tricks, he may score them all; but he may not take his fifty, or his hundred, above the line unless he has contracted to make his six tricks, or his seven. As yet, no change in the slam laws has been made.

The Laws, not touched since 1917, have just been remodeled by a committee of the

Whist Club. As I have frequently pointed out, there were numerous ambiguities in the Laws; some of these I discussed at great length, prior to 1917, and it gave me great satisfaction to find my suggested changes appearing in the new Laws of that date; —I do not claim any influence in the changes, but they were certainly the exact ends to which I had fought. Other ambiguities are now admitted to have survived; should the happy time ever come when there were no ambiguities and no omissions in the Laws, few or no decisions would have to be referred to the Whist Club by outsiders. A copy of the Laws would be all that was necessary. It has also been found desirable recently to alter the arrangement of the Laws.

Various changes in their substance (entailing intrinsic changes in the game itself) were proposed. The most important of these was that the first trick lost on a contract should count double—one hundred above the line, two hundred if doubled, four hundred if

redoubled; this would have carried with it a corresponding increase in the value of the bonus for winning a doubled hand. No trick but the first was to be so altered, the others remaining at fifty.

It would have been an absurd change. Apart from the uneven value it would give the tricks, it must be apparent to the stupidest person that it is easier to take one trick from a contract than to take two—easier to defeat a bid by one trick than by two; in fact, each additional trick grows harder, so that if there were to be any differentiation in value, it should be in an *ascending* scale, not a descending one. The increased value should be given to the trick that is the *hardest* to make, not to the one that is the *easiest.*

It is plain to see the source of the plan. There are players who never want anything, or anyone, to interfere with their good hands. They are never interested in giving the other side a chance; they never liked nullos; they always want to say, "Shoo-fly, get

off the earth. Don't spoil this big hand of mine."

A case was instanced in which a four-diamond hand with thirty-five honors was bidding against a four-spade hand with thirty-six honors. Neither hand could make more than four, but four would mean game to the spade-hand while it wouldn't to the diamond. It was pointed out that the diamond-hand could bid five (losing fifty and scoring thirty-five) and could therefore keep the spade-hand from going game. (What a pity! What a terrible shame!) But we are not told why the spade-hand couldn't just as well go to five (losing fifty and scoring thirty-six) if he wanted to. Nor why he should own the earth. Nor yet why, after defeating the five-diamond bid, he hasn't still an even chance at the game on the next hand (since the diamond-hand can no more go game than can he, and the issue is still open). The spade-hand is, moreover, fifteen points to the good in the honor-score. He has scored on the hand, and has still his

chance; but he is aggrieved because his game has been spoiled.

A very specious argument was put forward in favor of this innovation (one hundred for the first trick taken on a defeat). It was that the odds were too great against the spade-hand just quoted. The maximum winnings on the diamond-hand would be 63 points (28 below the line and 35 above it); while on the spade-hand the winnings would be "197—thirty-six points, thirty-six honors, and *a hundred and twenty-five for game*—game being half of rubber."

Now, while it is perfectly true that a game is half of a rubber, it is not true that the first game is equivalent to a hundred and twenty-five actual points; only in the event of making the second game is it worth anything at all; and the making of that second game is by no means a sure thing.

Arguing thus with a supporter of the would-be innovation, I was assured that every game was worth an actual hundred

and twenty-five. Asked to prove it, he said: "You get a game, and it gives you a hundred and twenty-five, though it is not the custom so to write it. You get another game, and you then take its bonus, plus the bonus of its predecessor, and write it down in a lump sum —two hundred and fifty."

"Then," said I, "we'll take the case where you win the first game and its hundred and twenty-five. I win the second and *its* hundred and twenty-five. You win the third —your rubber is worth but one hundred and twenty-five to you."

"No, no," he answered. "I win the first and its bonus, you win the second, and your bonus cancels mine."

"Then your rubber is worth but the bonus on the third game—one hundred and twenty-five?"

"Certainly not. The second game, being rubber, is worth two hundred and fifty."

"Very well. In the case of your winning two straight games, the first is worth one

hundred and twenty-five and the second two hundred and fifty—making your rubber worth three hundred and seventy-five?"

"Certainly not."

"Then some second games are worth twice as much as others?"

"You're forcing the point," he said. (*I*, if you please, was the one who was forcing a point. But such being the case, I proceeded to rub it in.)

"About this canceling business," I continued—"where you get a thing and I, on getting the same thing, cancel yours instead of winning my own: if you win two no-trump tricks on a hand, you score twenty; now, if I win two no-trump tricks on the next hand, *does that merely cancel yours?* Or do we each score our twenty?"

"Each scores twenty, of course!"

"Yet if you win a hundred and twenty-five above the line, and I win the same, mine cancels yours. Or if it doesn't, your rubber is diminished by half its worth."

All of which proves that it is better to look all the way around a post than a little way around one of its sides.

In the case of the aforementioned spade-hand being held at the beginning of the second game, the odds are of course against it. But the facts remain that though it can not score game, neither can its adversary; that an adversary should be allowed a fighting chance, and the choice of two losses; that the thing equalizes in the long run; that a good fight is better sport than a walk-away; and that it is a matter of luck whether the spots on a man's cards happen to be red or black; and that since this is the case, it is a mistake and a detriment to a good game unduly to exalt one suit above another.

Now, it being a matter of luck whether the spots on a man's cards are red or black, why not give them both a fighting chance? Weren't the suit-values moved and put a mere point apart, just in order that inequality might be killed and the minor-suits have a showing?

Certainly they were. If honors make a one-trick loss too profitable, then let us do what I have been urging for years, and stop scoring honors. It is too much like giving a man money and then paying him for having it. The winning power of high cards is quite enough, without any extra reward being bestowed upon them.

However, I fear that the day when honors will cease to be scored is far away. In the meantime, it gives me pleasure to record that this question of doubling the value of the first defeating trick having been put to vote, not one single vote was cast in its favor.

Another mooted subject was the Revoke. It has long seemed senseless to me that it should be worth three tricks to one side, and the value of but two tricks to the other side. The decision on this subject, as well as on all others, you will find embodied in the latest Laws—the Laws of 1920—which are here appended.[1]

[1] Laws of 1920 not yet issued

From the other side of the Atlantic there comes word of a new variant of Auction. Although of English origin, no standing is yet claimed for it in the land of its birth; but it is asserted that it "has swept Auction out of Paris inside a week." For the credit of Paris and its card taste, one hopes that this may be a mistake.

The new game is called "Contract Auction," or "Contract Bridge"—I'm not quite sure which. It is slow—one rubber being often all that can be accomplished in an evening's sitting. It is heavy—doing away with the subtler points of our game. It is retrogressive—sacrificing the near-equality of the suits which came in with our present count (for under its banner, the minor-suits retire once more into the shades from which we dragged them in establishing this count), raising luck-percentage, and copying some of the ideas of the inferior game of Five Hundred.

Only the number of tricks bid may be scored below the line; this means that the

minor-suits are never mentioned except as an invitation to no-trumps (just as we used to do it some seven years ago, before we learned better); in the case of more tricks being taken than are bid, the extra tricks are scored at fifty apiece above the line.

This makes slow rubbers, and heavy ones. The overhead column is very long. Half of the subtle over-calls (those cleverest of latter-day discoveries) vanish. Unsafe no-trumpers remain unsafe no-trumpers, and go down in dust and ashes.

No honors lower that four in one hand are scored. The luck percentage is thus raised (for four honors in one hand is certainly a piece of great luck). When luck percentage is raised, skill percentage is necessarily lowered (there being only a hundred per cent of anything). And the lower the skill percentage of a game, the less its dignity and mental appeal.

Again, inequality results. If you have the luck to hold four honors in one hand, my best

chance of recovering from the blow is of holding simple honors twice or thrice against you. This equalization is denied the man who plays Contract Auction.

Enormous bonuses are proposed for slam and little slam. To my mind, the slam bonuses are just about right as they are. A slam may be the result of great skill or great cards: when coming from great skill, our old values were certainly too slight a reward—(forty for slam, and twenty for little slam would not seem much nowadays); but no one need sneeze at fifty and a hundred as payment for his skill. And on the other hand, when a slam is scored merely by force of a huge hand that couldn't help taking tricks, anything over fifty and a hundred would certainly be too much in the way of a bonus.

This is all a mere outline of the proposed new variant; more would, I think, be unnecessary, for I cannot believe that it will win many supporters. If a player likes a slow game, a heavy game, a game with more luck

and less skill, a game that lacks subtlety, a game that substitutes a "big stick" for a pair of fencing foils, then he'll love Contract Auction. But I'm optimistic enough to think that such players are in the minority.

You who read this book and who love Auction as it stands, who would be glad to welcome any real improvement but who would mourn to see it mutilated, can all help in protecting it. I don't believe it will ever become a question of a battle between Auction and Contract Auction; but should it so happen, you know where we stand. Just set your faces against the usurper. Behead him at birth, and award the crown and the sceptre to the belovèd game in whose honor this little volume has been written!

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